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October - December, 2009



# STAR OF THE EAST

نُجُومُ الْمَشْرِقِ

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an ecumenical journal dealing  
specially with the Oriental and  
Eastern Orthodox Churches

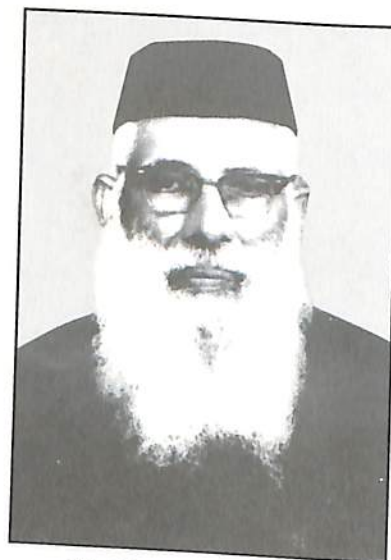
# PATH BREAKERS OF THE STAR OF THE EAST



*His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios  
Marthoma Mathews II*



*H.G. Dr. Paulos Mar  
Gregorios*



*Fr. Dr. C. T. Eapen*

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## EDITORIAL

### The *Star* Reappears

With this issue of the *Star of the East*, we are resuming its publication after a silence of 12 years. Started by the Rev. Dr. C.T. Eapen (1977) of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India and later continued by Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios of Delhi (+1996) the journal had always received the patronage of His Holiness Basilius Marthoma Mathews II, Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan of the Orthodox Syrian Church of India. With the passing away of Metropolitan Mar Gregorios in November 1996, the *Star* too eclipsed to the regret of all those who loved Mar Gregorios and avidly received the journal edited by him.

Now with renewed determination, we are bringing it out again in the service of Church and society. Its founder editor, its former chief editor and its former patron were great visionaries. They were tireless workers who believed in the oneness and unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, in spite of disheartening divisions, and in the glorious calling of humanity created in God's image.

It is our deep desire to carry forward the torch of life and knowledge handed over to us by these great men though our own resources are rather limited. We sincerely hope that the readers of the *Star* would rejoice with us in its revival, and graciously lend their support and blessings as before.

### Communion and Witness of Orthodox Churches

The two families of Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches have been discussing for some decades the possibility of formally restoring eucharistic communion that had been broken in the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon held in AD-451. The unofficial consultations of theologians since 1964 and the official dialogue of Orthodox Churches since 1985 have reached the conclusion that both families hold the same apostolic faith in Christ and maintain authentic theological, liturgical and spiritual traditions of the undivided Church. The ancient Christological disputes are now overcome by means of intense theological dialogue, mutual respect and fraternal love in Christ. The official Commission has recommended to the local Orthodox Churches that their faithful be prepared so that we can resolve some of the remaining pastoral and



liturgical issues on the way to communion. These series of theological conversations and agreements reached between the two Orthodox families constitute an historic event of stupendous ecumenical significance. All the Orthodox Churches fervently and constantly pray for the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, and this development may rightly be taken as part fulfillment of that prayer. We wait and hope patiently for its full realization in our time by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Malankara Orthodox Church of India is particularly happy about this ecumenical breakthrough, because two of its outstanding 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians, Fr. Dr. V. C. Samuel and Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios (formerly Fr. Paul Verghese) were among the chief architects of the dialogue from the Oriental Orthodox side. Visits of Patriarchs and other dignitaries of sister Orthodox churches to the Indian Orthodox Church on the invitation of the H.H. the Catholicos in recent years underscored the urgency of restoring communion between the two Orthodox families. Some of the more notable among the visits are the following: Visits of the Ecumenical Patriarch His All Holiness Bartholomew of Constantinople, together with H.E. Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, former co-chairman of the official Inter Orthodox Commission for Dialogue in 2000, H.E. Metropolitan Kyrill of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2006, H.H. Karekin II, Supreme Catholicos and Patriarch of All Armenians in 2008 and most recently H.H. Abune Paulos, Patriarch of Ethiopia in 2008-09.

In between, the former Catholicos of the Indian Church H.H. Marthoma Mathews II visited Holy Etchmiadzin for the consecration of the Supreme Catholicos Karekin I and for the 1700<sup>th</sup> year jubilee celebrations of the Armenian Church. The present Indian Catholicos H.H. Baselios Marthoma Didymos I visited H.H. Shenouda III, Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Church in 2005 in Cairo.

In the light of such encouraging dialogue and mutual visits, we publish the article of Dr. Kenneth Yossa, whose recent doctoral dissertation at the Marquette University, USA, deals with the historic Inter Orthodox Theological Dialogue since 1964. We wish to urge the official Commission and all concerned in our local Orthodox Churches to continue the work so far accomplished to its conclusion so that all may rejoice in the witness of our churches to reconciliation and unity in Christ.

### **Towards a Spirituality of the Local**

The present financial meltdown across the globe is yet another sign of the fragility of our much-vaunted globalised world. While nations may hopefully recover from this slump for the time being, there is increasing

evidence that globalisation's erasing of local cultures and local economies associated with people's identity will have devastating effect on any global system. One major question for the future of humanity then is how to strike a healthy balance between the local realities and the global aspirations, between an exclusivistically parochial cultural-economic identity and an imperialistically inclusive globalism. We seem to have enough of the global awareness of our life on the planet earth in the form of impending crises like global warming and other ecological threats. We also now directly experience the global power of the Internet and other communication network in our daily lives. They, however, are not reasons for ignoring *the local, the particular and the plural* in the guise of a sweeping, standardised, uniformative, *One World* concept. Some of the backlashes to globalisation in the name of religion, culture, ethnicity and race seem to illustrate this. However, communication in its various forms seems to ignore locality and its geographical, spatial and temporal attributes.

The Christian churches have a special responsibility to spell out the quality and meaning of *the Local* since they originally began as diverse locally rooted faith communities, with geographical attributes and particular cultural flavours. In spite of their separate local rootedness and cultural identity they always held sacred the notion of 'Catholicity' expressed as the fullness of truth, the unbroken integrity and communion of the one body and the holistic and all-embracing nature of the gospel of Christ announced to all peoples of the world. This Catholicity is not a quantitative, geographical and spatial notion of extensiveness. The Church has always been *Catholic* even before it spread to different parts of the world. It is rather qualitative in its manifestation and aspiration, not at all comparable to any imperialist, expansionist, globalization. Most of the unfortunate divisions in the history of the Church can be traced to the distortion of the word *Catholic*, wrongly understood as geographically universal, and the consequent disregard for the quality of catholicity and the integrity of the Local.

The Christian Churches, therefore, have an urgent responsibility to provide a spirituality of the *Local* and see if their own understanding of the Local and the Universal has ever sidetracked the qualitative notion of Catholicity or ignored the spiritual-theological dimensions of the truly Local. This may provide a new perspective to our contemporary secular world struggling how to keep together in right balance the global and the local, as sometimes wistfully expressed in neologisms like *glocal*.

KMG



*In Memoriam***Rev. Dr. C. T. Eapen (1985 - 1977)**

Educationist, ecumenist, visionary, writer, theologian and a great lover of the Orthodox Church, Rev. Dr. C. T. Eapen will be remembered for his contributions to the church and society. Born to God-fearing and noble parents, Thommi Muthalaly and Aleyamma in the Nellimoottil Chavadiyil family of Adoor, he had his education in India and America. It was his great desire to start an institution of learning modelled on the best institutions he had seen abroad. After taking his M.A. and Ph.D in education from Chicago University, came back and started a Residential School in Sasthamcotta on the banks of the Sasthamcotta lake, and spent his time and energy in moulding the character of the students there. He also served as a member of the Malankara Association Managing Committee and working Committee and served for sometime as a Professor in the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. He was the Governing Board Member of Mount Tabor Dayara, Pathanapuram, Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta, and also served in the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Orthodox Syrian Church. He represented the Orthodox Syrian Church of India at the second W.C.C. Assembly in Evanston (1954) and the 2nd Vatican Council, 1962, as an observer. He inspired the youth of the Orthodox church through his activities in the Students Movement and was the first general secretary of the Orthodox student conference.

The ecumenical journal 'The Star of the East' started by him conveyed to the other christian churches, knowledge about the Indian Church of St. Thomas. Dr. Eapen left a legacy to the church, which has been taken up and nurtured by the Trust which was chaired by H.G. Mathews Mar Coorilos, the then Metropolitan of Quilon Diocese and late the Catholicos of the Orthodox church.

*In Memoriam***Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of Delhi (1922-1996)**

The many facets of the life and work of Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios point to the versatility of his interests and range of his contributions.

First Metropolitan of Delhi Diocese; Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam; Founder of the Delhi Orthodox Centre.

Articulator of the Orthodox faith across the world; Biblical scholar and teacher; Exponent of sacred traditions; Promoter of unity among Orthodox Churches; Ecumenical leader devoted to interfaith dialogue and cooperation; President of the World Council of Churches.

Scholar, philosopher, author, educationist, editor, linguist, public speaker, socio-political thinker, lover of children and nature, advocate of women's equality, environmental integrity and holistic health.

Crusader against exploitation, discrimination, neo-colonialism and religious-cultural arrogance; activist for disarmament, justice and peace.

Life-long seeker after the light of knowledge, truth, and the transcendent source of our being.

May his memory be eternal!

*"God is good. He alone is truly and fully good. He is good without mixture of evil; in Him all evils disappears. ... From Him comes all good. All that is good not only comes from Him, but is also His presence. Where the good is, there God is present."*

*"Experience shows that the deeper we go into our respective religions, the more clearly we find that basic love of God and love for all humanity which should unite us all. The more rooted one is in one's own tradition the freer and more secure one becomes in facing our fellow human beings and finding our unity in God and in our shared aspirations."*

**- Paulos Mar Gregorios**



*In Memoriam*

**His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II** (January 30, 1915 - January 26, 2006) Visionary and spiritual leader, who has left an indelible mark in the history of the Orthodox Church, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews II was the supreme head of the Indian Orthodox Church, 89th Successor to the Holy Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan.

His Holiness was born at Perinad in Kollam district of Kerala, and had his initial religious training at Old Seminary Kottayam and also at Basil Dayara, Pathanamthitta. Later he joined Bishop's College, Calcutta for his B. D. degree, and studied Theology at the General Theological Seminary, New York.

He was ordained as Deacon in 1938 and then as Priest in 1941. It was during his stay at St. George Dayara Othara that Father Mathews made a mark as a devoted and an able priest of the Indian Orthodox Church. He was noted for his spiritual leadership and loving nature and could endear himself to everyone who came in contact with him, and was called "Father Angel" at that time. His Holiness, Baselios Geevarghese II, took special interest in the activities of Father Mathews.

On May 15, 1953 he was consecrated as a Bishop of the Orthodox church at the age of thirtyeight. As Metropolitan of the Diocese of Kollam, he was fully responsible for its growth and progress and the number of parishes almost doubled within a short period. Several monasteries and convents were started. A large number of educational institutions and hospitals were established. Several colleges, schools, hospitals and other service institutions were established and administered under his direct control and leadership. He has travelled to various countries including the United States, Canada, Europe, Malaya, Singapore and Gulf countries, and has attended various international meetings and conferences.

It was in 1980 that he was unanimously elected by the Malankara Syrian Christian Association as successor to the throne of Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan. In recent years some of the new schemes started under his directions are found to be of much help and benefit for the community at large. A Civil Service Academy was started at Thiruvananthapuram, to give proper training for candidates appearing for Central Service Examinations. With a view to provide shelter for the poor, a House Building Assistance project was started. The Community Marriage Scheme is found beneficial for the marriage of poor girls. Human Resources Development and Services Wing is also helpful for the community in general.

As President of the Ecumenical committee in Kerala and also in various other Inter-Church Committees he has shown excellent leadership. He kept in touch with the heads of other churches and promoted Ecumenism. Due to ill health and old age His Holiness abdicated his position as the Supreme Head of the Indian Orthodox Church on 29 October 2005. His Holiness died on Thursday, January 26th, 2006. His body was interred in Mount Horeb Chapel, in Sasthamcotta on 28th, January 2006.

A person who has travelled widely, his Holiness inspired those who flocked to him to dedicate themselves to the love of God and serving of humanity. May the spiritual presence, blessings and prayers of His Holiness continue to guide the church.



## Inter-Orthodox Dialogue: Myths, Misunderstandings and Mediation

Rev. Dr. Kenneth F. Yossa

### ABSTRACT

Thanks in great measure to ecumenical dialogue, by the latter half of the twentieth century, more objective and critical understandings were gained with regard to the circumstances creating the schism, leading also to the conclusion that the historical charges of "Monophysitism" are no longer valid. Indeed, since the 1990s it has become the avowed position of many "Chalcedonian" or Eastern Orthodox churches and all "Cyrillian" or Oriental Orthodox churches that both communions authentically teach the reality of Christ's dual and co-existent humanity and divinity in the unity of the divine Person. In this essay, I will very note briefly some of the historical circumstances which brought about this separation, and provide a more detailed discussion of the attempts to heal it through inter-Orthodox ecumenical efforts—most particularly those of the latter portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### A House Divided: A-koinonia between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Families

From its remote beginnings to the present, Christianity has sought to understand and proclaim the truth of revelation entrusted to it by the Lord, and to express this authentically for each successive generation of believers. For the first millennium Church, this process was characteristically embodied in a process through which doctrine was refined and explicated in response to various doctrinal crises, especially through local or general synods. The manner in which such questions of

The Revd. Dr. Yossa's article is a summary of his Ph.D thesis submitted at the Marquette University, USA.

moment were to be answered—not merely the answers themselves—would determine not only the disposition of dogma, but the manner in which ecclesial communion or *koinonia* would exist among the constituent families of churches within the *una sancta*. The most significant of these began with the third century disputes regarding the nature of unity and diversity in the Godhead as three equally divine and eternal *Hypostases* or Persons. In the following century, controversies arose concerning Christ's equality and relationship to the God the Father. By the fifth century, further controversies ensued relative to how and to what degree the divinity of Christ was united to His humanity.

These last disputes, particularly, developed into sources of contention between the Alexandrine (or "Cyrillian") School which understood Christ's coexistent humanity and divinity within the unity of one nature and an opposing view, influenced somewhat by the Antiochene School, which held that two natures existed in the hypostatic unity of divine Person. (Such controversy itself originated within responses to the so-called Nestorian controversy two decades earlier in which Christ unity was defined as that of two Persons.) To clarify the teaching, the general council of Chalcedon (451) decreed that the "one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son must be confessed to be in two natures, without mixture, without change, indivisibly, inseparably [united] ... each nature being preserved and united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten." (From the *Symbol* of Chalcedon) Rather than unite the Church, the linguistic usage employed at the council and the philosophy upon which it was based brought differing models of theological discourse into even greater relief. With a rejection of the conciliar decrees by significant portions of the Church, along with Chalcedon's anathematization of leading dissenters, the seeds were sown for a separation in juridical and sacramental communion between the Byzantine ("Greek"/"Rûm"<sup>1</sup>) church (as well as the Latin church) and the "Cyrillian" churches of Alexandria and Antioch (and sometime later, Armenia). By the beginning of the sixth century, members of one side generally rejected the orthodoxy of the other—whether as a part of the *una sancta* or in terms of doctrinal authenticity. While there would be notable exceptions into the eighth century, the complete separation between the two bodies had hardened into a mutually definitive schism by the beginning of the second millennium, essentially continuing to this day. At least until the latter half of the twentieth century, the bodies commonly referred to each other (often disparagingly) as "Monophysite" (one-natured) or "Dyophysite" (two-natured).<sup>2</sup>



Through the efforts of modern rapprochement, however, realizing that such terms are essentially affirmations of misperceived distortions of each other's Christology, the "Byzantine" Orthodox family of churches is today usually referred to as *Eastern* and the "Cyrillian" Orthodox as *Oriental*. This rapprochement, in general, signaled the earnest re-start of discussion between the respective separated churches as the ecumenical movement gained currency within Orthodoxy.

Beginning with Orthodoxy's active involvement in establishing the World Council of Churches following World War II, initial opportunities were provided for hierarchs and theologians of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox communions to engage in direct discussion. These ecumenical contacts, among the only ones of their kind in the second millennium,<sup>3</sup> provided essentially for three areas of engagement, namely, 1) the mutual understanding of theological positions, 2) the potential establishment of common points and, 3) the prospects for eventual ecclesial unity of the communions. The bulk of this engagement was accomplished in two phases. The first consisted of four unofficial investigatory, fact-finding "consultations" of hierarchs and theologians from both bodies held at Aarhus, Denmark (1964), Bristol, England (1967), Chambésy, Switzerland (1970) and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (1971). These meetings provided the crucial foundations leading to official dialogue between the Orthodox churches in a second series of meetings at Chambésy (1985 and 1990), and Wadi-el Natrun, Egypt (1989).

### Rapprochement at Millennium's Close

The fourth and final official dialogue in the series was held by the Joint Commission of Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches (hereafter JCTD or Joint Commission) at the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Center in Chambésy, Switzerland between November 1-6, 1993.<sup>4</sup> Having slightly more participants than the preceding dialogue—thirty representatives in all—it was the first time that the JCTD gathered officially since the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

Metropolitan Damaskios of Switzerland, local representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the host of the meeting, summarized its objectives:

*"The present Meeting ... is of utmost importance not only for evaluating correctly the truly historic theological work of our Commission which had already been accomplished in our previous ecclesiastical meetings, but also for facilitating the necessary ecclesiastical procedures for the restoration of full communion."*<sup>6</sup>

An analysis of the communiqué indicates that nothing especially novel or original was produced during the dialogue; rather, it reiterated the themes produced in previous encounters, particularly from the second and third official dialogues held in 1983 and 1989. In the course of the work week, the dialogue partners considered five questions. Three of these dealt with the heretofore recurrent issue of lifting the canonical anathemas, specifically attempting to determine 1) what ecclesiastical authority possessed competence to do so, 2) which anathemas could be lifted in light of the Second Agreed Statement (no. 10) and 3) what canonical procedure would have to be observed to restore *koinonia*.<sup>7</sup> The remaining questions sought to "understand and implement" ecclesial communion, as well as its consequences liturgically and canonically.<sup>8</sup> Both sets of representatives caucused throughout the week, producing two reports appropriate to the issues at hand. The Oriental Orthodox delegation had produced an additional document in response. At length, an ad hoc committee of the JCTD was established to create a proposal for the two communions, based on these papers and deliberations.<sup>9</sup> The statement of the ad hoc committee includes the following recommendations.

The lifting of the anathemas should be made unanimously and simultaneously by the Heads of all the Churches of both sides, through the signing of an appropriate ecclesiastical Act, the content of which will include acknowledgements from each side that the other one is Orthodox in all respects.

*The lifting of the anathemas should imply:*

- a. that restoration of full communion for both sides is to be immediately implemented;
- b. that no past condemnation, synodical or personal, against each other is applicable;
- c. that a catalogue of Diptychs of the Heads of the Churches should be agreed upon to be used liturgically.

*At the same time the following practical steps should be taken:*

- a. The Joint Sub-Committee for Pastoral issues should continue its very important task according to what had been agreed at the 1990 meeting of the Joint Commission.
- b. The co-chairmen of the Joint Commission should visit the Heads of the Churches with the view to offering fuller information on the outcome of the Dialogue.



- c. *A Liturgical Sub-Committee should be appointed by both sides to examine the liturgical implications arising from the restoration of communion and to propose appropriate forms of con-celebration.*
- d. *Matters relating to ecclesiastical jurisdiction should be left to be arranged by the respective authorities of the local churches according to common canonical and synodical principles.*
- e. *Two co-Chairmen of the Joint Commission with the two Secretaries of the Dialogue should make provisions for the production of appropriate literature explaining our common understanding of the Orthodox faith which has led us to overcome the divisions of the past, and also coordinating the work of the other Sub-Committees.<sup>10</sup>*

In the intervening years, 1993 to 2006, several other Oriental and Eastern Orthodox ecumenical initiatives have been undertaken—both of an unofficial nature, in various visits between hierarchs, and of a more official, group character. The dialogue did not end with the 1993 Chambésy Conference, although I would suggest that the main dialogue took place during the period of the official dialogues.<sup>11</sup>

### Shifting Dynamics: Ecumenical Encounters after Chambésy, 1993

On a more or less annual basis, various groups of interlocutors met to continue the discussions regarding numerous aspects of unity between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox communions. However, only one formal meeting of the JCTD has taken place since the 1993 meeting in Chambésy, and at the time of this writing a plenary session seems unlikely in the near future.<sup>12</sup> In place of the traditional bilateral dialogue, representing more or less equally the two communions, engagement with representatives of the respective churches in their native lands have essentially followed along two courses since the mid-1990s.<sup>13</sup> Both clearly retain continuity with the previous work of rapprochement and affirm what has already been accomplished (although not always with the same force or urgency).

The first course is found among the Eastern Orthodox European Churches, notably the Moscow and Romanian patriarchates. Since the disestablishment of the Soviet Union, the former in particular has increasingly arrogated to itself a role as “lead church” among the Eastern Orthodox in a number of areas, including ecumenical endeavors. Such a posture led to the eventual withdrawal of the Moscow Patriarchate from the traditional manner of engagement of the JCTD. It established its own

commission for dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox sub-committee as a whole, independent of any other autocephalous Eastern Orthodox body. Other Eastern Orthodox interlocutors have expressed sentiments ranging from a cautious but forward-looking optimism to virtual renunciation of the dialogues—particularly with regard to the concord reached regarding Cyrillian (or “Alexandrine”) and Chalcedonian Christologies. While the resolution of questions regarding the ecumenicity of the general councils after Ephesus and the standing of individuals or opinions anathematized by the synods, should be the core concern for current and future dialogue, some bodies continue to insist that further discussion regarding the Christological issues is necessary. Yet not one autocephalous Eastern European Orthodox body has to date rendered a conclusive, official judgment on any of the JCTD recommendations. Insistence that certain Christological issues remain on the table in some instances, remains an impediment toward resolution of the more important issues just identified. Worse still, in two instances (viz. Bulgaria and Georgia<sup>14</sup>) the inter-Orthodox rapprochement of recent decades has been renounced altogether.<sup>15</sup>

The second course is found generally among two subgroups, 1) the hierarchs of the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox churches who are participating members of the Middle East Council of Churches<sup>16</sup> and 2) hierarchs from within the Oriental Orthodox communion, itself, especially the respective lead hierarchs who collectively designate themselves as the “Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East.”<sup>17</sup> In general, the testimony of Orthodox groups of the region as well as the documentary record exhibit not only a satisfaction that an essential Christological concord has been achieved, but that “ecclesial hospitality”—including mutual sacramental sharing under tightly specified conditions—has become an urgent necessity, given the *Sitz im Leben* of all Christian groups living in most Islamic countries.<sup>18</sup>

### Major Eastern European Initiatives

The first indication of a specifically European Eastern Orthodox initiative was made known by statements concerning the dialogues by the Russian and Romanian patriarchates in December of 1994. Certainly, as I have already noted, review and judgment of the JCTDs work by the various Orthodox hierarchies was an intended and expected outcome by the dialogue partners. The high optimism which characterized most of the consultations and dialogues throughout their relatively brief history was (at least among Eastern Europeans) rapidly replaced by a skepticism—



even outright denial in some instances—concerning the gains made in the preceding years by the dialogue partners.

After reviewing the pertinent data, the Moscow Patriarchate (reporting through its Holy Synod) considered the Second Agreed Statement as non-definitive, calling for the JCTD to “continue its work.”<sup>19</sup> The Synod also requested that its own Theological Commission be given the “task of preparing a more detailed study of the previous meetings of theologians “of both sides” and discussions with dialogue partners “from other Orthodox churches.”<sup>20</sup> Once accomplished, the “Russian Orthodox Church will make its opinions known to the Joint Commission...”<sup>21</sup> although at the time of this writing, such a conference has not taken place.

At the same time, the Holy Synod recommended that a discussion of inter-Orthodox unity is timely and should include the participation of the whole Church.”<sup>22</sup>

Another statement, issued by the Bishops’ Council of the Moscow Patriarchate in February, 1997, reiterates the 1994 proposition that the Second Agreed Statement “should not be regarded as a final document sufficient for the restoration of full communion” between the two bodies. Nonetheless, the Bishops’ Council recognized the intention of the JCTD to “welcome the spirit of fraternity, mutual understanding” and the shared desire to hold faithfully to the Tradition of the Apostles and the Fathers.<sup>23</sup> While the statement concludes with its recommendation that a “plan” be developed to “help introduce [Russian Orthodox] clergymen and faithful...to the problems and development” of the Eastern-Oriental dialogue, it is preceded by a more unusual statement:

The Russian Orthodox Church has special historical and ecclesiastical reasons and grounds to promote the success of the dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Our Church throughout her history has protected and defended the Orthodox East.<sup>24</sup>

The Romanian Patriarchate, although somewhat guarded in its expression, generally approved the conclusions made in the previous dialogues, particularly as a result of the conversations held between a Romanian Orthodox commission for dialogue and the two JCTD co-presidents on October 25, 1994.<sup>25</sup> During its December 8-9, 1994 session, the Romanian Holy Synod presented a more optimistic and conciliatory tone than that of the Moscow Patriarchate. The document further asks that consideration be given [to] the special context in which the anathemas were pronounced, a context which was characterized by division, by the absence of a consensus in the formulation of the confession of faith, as

well as by the absence of fraternal charity. The same document recognizes the current context in which the lifting of anathemas is discussed, and which is characterized by a spirit of reconciliation, of mutual forgiveness and of the common confession of the same content of the common faith.<sup>26</sup>

The statement also affirmed that cancellation of the anathemas could be accomplished “through a consensus of the Holy Local Councils” in lieu of a general council; ratification of this could then be made within a common written agreement and a Eucharistic celebration by the primates of the participating bodies.<sup>27</sup> Like the Moscow statement, this text also recommends that Church history and Patristics professors at the Romanian Patriarchate’s theological faculties be provided with the results of the dialogues “with a view of revising the chapters concerning the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches...” that appear in standard texts.<sup>28</sup> The conclusion of the text leaves little doubt that the Romanian Orthodox Synod envisions eventual unity between the “two families of Orthodox Churches.”<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, however, interest in such an initiative has waned altogether to the present time (at least officially) among the Eastern European Orthodox Churches—excepting the Moscow Patriarchate. Since the beginning of the 2000s, several significant meetings have been held between the Russian Church and various components of the Oriental Orthodox. On March 20, 2001, a one-day conference of the “Coordinating Committee for the Dialogue of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Coptic, Syrian and Armenian Apostolic Churches” met for the first time, hosted by the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. A communiqué issued by the Coordinating Committee amplified and clarified earlier statements made by the Moscow Patriarchate regarding the work of inter-ecclesial unity, although it fell far short of providing any endorsement of the disputed Second Agreed Statement:

His Holiness Alexei, the Patriarch said that the beginning of bilateral talks did not call in question the significance of the pan-Orthodox dialogue which has been underway for the recent decades. The Russian Orthodox Church will continue participating in the dialogue of the Orthodox Churches with the Oriental Orthodox Churches on the whole range of issues under discussion today, including pastoral and liturgical subjects. On the other hand, it is necessary to give a fresh impetus to the mutual study of theological traditions existing in the Orthodox and Oriental Churches, especially in the area of Christological terminology. In doing so, it is important to exert maximum efforts not to defend agreed



documents or formulae, but rather to find agreement between our Churches on the questions of faith.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, the statement provided a positive endorsement for initiatives oriented toward an "exchange of opinions and agreed actions in the area of Christian relations with society, culture, science, mission and answers to the pressing problems of today."<sup>31</sup>

A longer, second meeting of the Coordinating Committee was again hosted by the Moscow Patriarchate between September 4-6, 2001, and included several new members. During this meeting, two papers were presented.<sup>32</sup> A post-meeting communiqué provides essentially the same statement of cooperation (with regard to social and pastoral issues) and reiterates the need to "clarify the Christological formulations contained in the [Second Agreed Statement]."<sup>33</sup>

The third and most recent Coordinating Committee meeting (as of this writing) was hosted at the Armenian Catholicosate in Antelias, Lebanon from December 12-16, 2005.<sup>34</sup> The communiqué issued on this occasion stated previously less-specific reservations regarding the Second Agreed Statement:

Study documents were presented by both families about the last 4 Ecumenical Councils [following Ephesus], the decisions of which were not recognized by the Oriental Churches as they contradicted previously established agreements between the two families, in 1989 in Amba Bishoy Monastery-Egypt and in 1990 in the Orthodox Center in Switzerland. The study documents aimed at facilitating the acceptance of the conclusions of the theological dialogue between the two Orthodox families by other churches that, to date, have not sent the agreements of their respective Sacred Councils [i.e., synods].<sup>35</sup>

#### *Major Middle-Eastern Initiatives*

In marked contrast to the slow progress, outright condemnation or lack of response to the dialogues made by the Eastern European Orthodox hierarchies, Middle East Orthodox hierarchies have made comparatively far greater strides. This is evident not only in the success of multi-faceted relations between Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox bodies in these regions, but of increasing cooperation and interaction among Oriental Orthodox bodies, themselves. The impetus for such cooperation reflects the unique situation in the Middle East where significant numbers of Eastern and Oriental Christians live together in local communities—and the common threat posed to their way of life under Islamic nations which

severely restrain or restrict outright their free exercise of religion and other civil liberties.

From the end of the last Chambésy dialogue to the present, meetings have frequently been held which have maintained a more progressive rapprochement. These include the formulation of a "Common Declaration" (January 18, 1998) between the Coptic and Armenian hierarchies, which asked respective hierarchs, clergy and lay faithful worldwide to

develop closer relationships and to advance in the genuine ecumenical ways of mutual cooperation by being motivated by the unity and demand of our faith and by the concern for the spiritual health and creative service of our people around the world, particularly in our service to the young generation.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to eight formal meetings of the "heads" (i.e., patriarchs) of the Middle East (including Armenia) Oriental Orthodox Churches, the last meeting was held February 2-5, 1998, at Holy Cross Cathedral of the Greek Patriarchate of Antioch at Damascus. Thirty Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox theologians participated, under the co-presidency of Metropolitan Damaskinos and Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette (Egypt).<sup>37</sup> At this meeting four papers were presented, although topically they did not deviate from the cursus of previous engagements.<sup>38</sup> A most signal achievement, arguably the most important unity initiative to date, came about with an arrangement by which faithful of the respective Alexandrian patriarchates could validly enter into marriage with the assistance of a priest representing one jurisdiction or the other. It provides not only a rationale for a new and eminently useful pastoral practice for Middle East Orthodox Christians, but also indicates the anticipation of the respective hierarchies in the establishment of communion.

Since the Holy Synods of both the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa have already accepted the outcome of the official dialogue on Christology between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, including the two official agreements: the first on Christology signed in June, 1989 in Egypt and the second also on Christology and on the lifting of anathemas and restoration of full communion signed in Geneva 1990, in which it is stated that "In the light of our agreed statement on Christology ... we have now clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of Apostolic tradition." It was agreed to have mutual recognition of the



sacrament of Baptism, based on what St Paul wrote, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5)

But since up until now we are waiting for the responses of the Holy Synods of some other churches in both families, the restoration of full communion is not yet reached between the two sides of the bi-lateral dialogue.<sup>39</sup> And due to the pastoral consequences and implications caused by mixed Christian marriages between the members of the two Patriarchates of Alexandria, having the majority of their people living in the same countries, those marriages being difficult to perform in both Churches at the same time or in concelebration. The result is that many sensitivities are created between the two families of the partners of such marriage. Those sensitivities which can extend even after the marriage and may affect the relation between the two communities of churches.

For those mentioned reasons, the Holy Synods of both Patriarchates have agreed to accept the sacrament of marriage which is conducted in either Church with the condition that it is conducted for two partners not belonging to the same Patriarchate of the other Church from their origin. Both the Bride and the Groom should carry a valid certificate from his/her own Patriarchate that he/she has a permit of marriage and indicating the details of his/her marriage status up to date.

Each of the two Patriarchates shall also accept to perform all of its other sacraments to that new family of Mixed Christian Marriage.

It is agreed that the Patriarchate which shall perform the marriage shall be responsible for any marriage problems that may happen concerning this certain marriage, taking into consideration the unified marriage laws signed by the heads of Churches in Egypt in the year 1999.

Each Patriarchate shall preserve its right not to give its sacraments to any persons whom she does not find fulfilling its canons according to the Apostolic Tradition.<sup>40</sup>

### Aarhus to Chambésy: Overview of the Central Issues

Upon observation, a pattern emerges which indicates the preeminence of three recurrent topics—all bearing on rapprochement and reconciliation between the partners and their respective ecclesial groups: 1) the question of the hypostatic union, in the context of mutually acceptable theological language reflecting the usages of the "Chalcedonian" and "Cyrillian" traditions, 2) the lifting of anathemas pronounced by synods, including the issue of the disputed status of persons, 3) the status of general councils following Ephesus in 351. These topics, while not the only ones, have

continued to exert the primary influence on the course of rapprochement to the present, particularly the last two.

### "One Nature of the Word Incarnate?"

While "monophysitism" or "dyophysitism" had been viewed as the primary issue in the earliest days of the ecumenical encounters of the partners (and considered such in the history of the dispute) quickly fell to a subordinate position in topical importance. Such a turn of events was aided not by compromises or disavowals of dogma—and this is very significant—but by the realization on the part of the partners that "mainstream" teachings regarding the unity of Person in Christ, on both sides, manifested radically common ground. A review of the record shows, however, that this doctrinal harmonization did not come all at once. The comparative speed by which understanding and agreement were gained even as the consultation stage was halfway completed, particularly regarding the core Christological issues, was far greater when compared to the issues which developed in later discussions. Archbishop Nersoyan's bold assessment of the situation of the Orthodox churches at Aarhus proved to be a prescient summary of the divergences in Christological language which would be later be acknowledged:

Both sides, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian alike, agree to this [Nicene] profession of faith fully. They have always agreed to it since the Council of Nicaea ... Both sides therefore accept, as a matter of course both unity and duality of Christ. One would think, off hand, that as an affirmation of faith and as a basis of unity this should be sufficient.

Yet the Fathers found that it was not enough. They felt, as the result of development of ideas on the subject, the need for erecting ramparts around the affirmation so that it could not be undermined by erroneous deductions and misinterpretations, and uncontrolled speculation could not do matricidal work by killing the central saving message of the affirmation, namely, the faith in the incarnation of the Son of God as man. Thus, in order to safeguard the core of the Christian message they used philosophical ideas to build up defenses around it.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the partners affirmed a common Christological faith, identifying at least one reason for the ancient divergence in theological discourse. However, some of the participants still held to their respective conventional notions (i.e., that the Christological terminology was understood only univocally), without sufficient consideration of the orthodoxy of the other.<sup>42</sup> In time such notions passed by quickly. Through theological investigation, particularly focused through the perspective of



critical history, its ancient political exigencies, and the inevitable difficulties caused by linguistics and philosophical expression, a new picture of an equally, mutually orthodox "one nature" and "two nature" Christology emerged.

Certainly, this pointed to a tremendous accomplishment at the consultations (reflected in the later conferences, as well) going far beyond the search for merely "appropriate" language in Christological discussion. Real *dialogue* among theologians, personally and passionately committed to the authenticity of the Christian faith, began to emerge for these Orthodox believers and leaders. In Christian antiquity, attempts to prevent or end schism and heresy suffered not only from the interference of political leaders and movements (both temporal and ecclesiastical), but perhaps from the method by which the attempts were executed. In reviewing even the general history of the events connected with Chalcedon, it is clear that the "negotiable" parameters of discussion became comparatively narrow with passing centuries, even decades. Several problems emerge here. First, there arises in the acknowledgement of the authenticity (or even suitability) of certain words as opposed to others, the assignment to these a meaning which may or may not be held universally. As a course of action, it frequently results in absolute "winners" and "losers;" as the historical record is so often a witness. Abetted by the State or by cultural forces, such activity can take on a trajectory which calcifies positions and makes them more difficult to evaluate objectively in the course of time. In the absence of a trans-generational context, efforts to determine a hermeneutic simultaneously faithful to an objective truth and allowing for multiple modes of expression are the more difficult. In the case of the Christological conversations among the partners, it was apparent that all these factors were taken into account as a kind of method—even if they never expressed this explicitly.

The other difficulty which arose not as much for the partners, but for the Orthodox unity movement in general (remaining so to the present), concerns the variance of "theological differential." The basic posture taken by the partners as believers and scholars just mentioned formed the basis upon which all the questions and problems would be worked toward positive outcomes. This allowed for the nearly phenomenal progress in the talks and for the resolution of a great number of issues, or at least proximate solutions. However, beyond the walls of the discussions, such progress is not necessarily a reality. It is worth mentioning that a more parochial or "doctrinaire" view of the issues at stake—influenced mainly by deficiencies in critical understanding—has led to delays or downright

repudiations of the work of ecumenical dialogue. Here I do not refer to a mere lack of understanding or a type of supine ignorance. In fact, this may not be the case at all, but rather results from what I have already mentioned as what words and accompanying ideas are recognized as remain absolutely static, i.e. how far can language (or symbol of any kind, for that matter) progress or develop in an equivocal sense and still remain faithful to the original idea. I would also ask conversely how language expressing an idea equivocally might still be faithful to the meaning of the original. This is the great point of departure for some of the Orthodox hierarchies who have or are currently studying the question of Eastern Christology.

I would suggest that the following remark made by John Meyendorff at Aarhus is a good example of the theological analysis which grew out of the earliest conversations regarding the meaning of *physis* and *hypostasis* and its relevance for the work of dialogue:

It is clear that our difficulty lies only in interpreting *physis* and *hypostasis*. For my part, I would say that Chalcedon's main work was to distinguish between these two terms. After Chalcedon, *hypostasis* was used to denote a concrete reality, and a personal entity; it makes it possible to look at Christ as a composite (*synthetos*) nature in one *hypostasis*. This terminology provides the Church with a means of expressing both the duality and the concrete unity of Christ. However, since every terminology is always conventional, the Orthodox Church has not excluded the possibility of using the old, pre-Chalcedonian terminology also, provided that it conveys the same meaning. Neither the *Tome* of Leo, nor the Twelve Anathemas of Cyril, nor the Chalcedonian definition are isolated documents: they must all be considered in the light of the entire Tradition of the Church.<sup>43</sup>

Some forty years later, observing the developments in the consultations and the dialogues in hindsight, Meyendorff's remark may seem somewhat obvious. Yet it was an expression of a previous inability—over a millennium in the making—to work the issue beyond mere semantics and recognize it rather as a problem of semiotics. Such an approach bore great dividends in supporting concord in a very pivotal area of rapprochement. This, not only in terms of systematic theology in general, but in affirmation of the principle that language can be varied between groups and remain faithful to a dogmatic teaching all at once. This was, with little doubt, one of the greatest achievements of the entire enterprise of Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox rapprochement. Yet, this course of events did not go without criticism in the days of the early discussions.



The Aarhus consultation, for example, dealt with whether or not the conclusions of the partners were entirely, in fact, faithful to the doctrine of the faith. An honest review of the facts would leave one hard pressed to affirm that either side "sold out." Indeed, when the issue of *theologoumena* and *philosophoumena* were introduced into the discussion, one member stated plainly (more as an admonition, than anything else) that "[t]he content of the faith cannot be compromised. We cannot afford to become indifferent to dogma."<sup>44</sup> Such a statement could have been made by a member of either side and would have been no surprise. Nevertheless, the concord which occurred could not be taken for granted. While many observers after Aarhus were "pleasantly surprised" with the progress made on the Christological issues and, "particularly [issues concerning] the leading personalities of the Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian traditions," there was a predictable and less-than-positive reaction from "some Eastern theologians."<sup>45</sup> Two areas were identified as problematic.

The first dealt with a refusal to recognize that the linguistic differences between the two Christological schools did not characterize differences of doctrine or, that the division between the churches could be attributed to a difference of emphasis, stressing "one nature" over "of the Word Incarnate" or vice versa.<sup>46</sup> The second concerned objections raised to the conclusion made at Aarhus that much of the discord between the respective parties in antiquity regarded the meaning of *physis*, holding that it was more an issue of "monotheletism" than "monophysitism."<sup>47</sup>

It became evident that this agreement was possible because of something very fundamental, namely, our converging line of thought regarding the essentials of the christological dogma concerning the humanity of Jesus, which the Logos of God assumed and purified .... We [i.e., the consultation partners] felt that there was room for further study here and that if this was undertaken by [both sides] it might prove to be of vital importance in our understanding of the fundamental agreement regarding the hypostatic union of the two natures in the One Person of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

The discussions not only resulted in a continued concord regarding the Christological issues, but achieved the intended effect of widening the field of understanding with regard to the particular usages of terminology and their validity as such to the essential satisfaction of both sides. A few years following the Bristol conference, Paul Verghese noted that the availability of "more documentation for the conclusions of Aarhus ... eliminated the possibility that the monothelete position was the one

espoused by the [sic] Oriental Orthodoxy."<sup>49</sup> V. C. Samuel's contribution to the discussion is particularly worthy of mention here:

The seeming difference between the words "two wills" and "one will" can find reconciliation if one goes behind the terms to the ideas that are affirmed. Both sides admit, for instance, that Jesus Christ has disclosed in Himself the will of God on the one hand, and the will of man as it ought to be on the other. Christ's will is, therefore, the will of man fulfilled in the will of God and the will of God united with the will of man. Viewed in this way, it is not that there are two wills in the one Christ [per se], but that His is the will in which the will of God and the will of man found their absolute union.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps more to the point, especially pertinent given my earlier remarks regarding semiotics, V. C. Samuel presents the case for the Syriac usage of "oneness" with regard to the *hypostasis* of the Godhead and that of the incarnate Logos, which does not mean that the volitional and the energistic faculty of either of the natures became swallowed up by that of the other nature. The one incarnate nature or hypostasis was formed of a union of the two natures of Godhead and manhood, each with its own properties. Since these properties included will and operation, it is clear that they were there in the one Christ ... [A]ll the words and deeds of Christ were an expression of a union of the volitional and energistic faculties of Godhead and manhood.<sup>51</sup>

This understanding is confirmed unanimously by the consultors in the Second Unofficial Consultation Agreed Statement, and concurs with the decrees of Constantinople II:

All of us agree that the human will is neither absorbed nor suppressed by the divine will in the Incarnate Logos, nor are they contrary to each other. The uncreated and created natures, with the fullness of their natural properties and faculties, were united without confusion or separation...[which] does not seem incompatible with the decision of the Council of Constantinople (680–681), which affirms two natural wills and two natural energies in Him existing indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, unconfusedly.<sup>52</sup>

Essentially, then, a more refined Christological consensus was achieved at Bristol and the principal results may be summarized as follows:<sup>53</sup>

—The reliance on the common Patristic heritage of both communions as one Church.



- Both communions share a common faith in Christ as God and man.
- A common affirmation of the divine permanence of the Godhead and humanity, with all its natural properties and faculties.
- The allowance for mutual recognition of the emphasis on Chalcedon's "without separation or division" for Oriental "miaphysites" and the "without change or confusion" clause for the Eastern "dyophysites."<sup>54</sup>

Pulcini notes the context of valuable amplifications and reiterations offered at Bristol, in which the "the participants ... called for an integrative and holistic approach—not simply a theoretical one—to rapprochement."<sup>55</sup> This is particularly affirmed in the desire expressed by the consultants to "not only give special consideration for Christological issues but those others which affect the canonical, liturgical, spiritual and juridical implications."<sup>56</sup> As the dialogic process progressed, these latter issues would come into greater relief.

The Geneva consultation marked a shift away from the Christological issues, demonstrated by the fact that no *specifically* Christological presentations were even given. Its Summary of Conclusions, however, reiterates the accord found previously between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox representatives:

On the essence of the Christological dogma our two traditions, despite fifteen centuries of separation, still find themselves in full and deep agreement with the universal tradition of the one undivided Church. It is the teaching of blessed Cyril on the hypostatic union that we both affirm, though we may use differing terminology to explain this teaching. We both teach that... Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, with all the properties and faculties that belong to Godhead and to humanity.<sup>57</sup>

The final consultation at Addis Ababa made no mention of Christological issues,<sup>58</sup> indicating that the "full and deep" agreement in the subject of Christology was such that other issues could be given more attention. It seemed that by the end of Bristol the "great debate" between the Chalcedonians and the Cyrillians could now, after nearly 1500 years, be consigned to the ages.<sup>59</sup> However, as is known from later developments, a certain and significant level of doubt of this still remained in some quarters. This was particularly telling, for example, from the record provided from the meeting of the joint Theological Subcommittees (the forerunner of the JCTD) held at the Pendeli Monastery near Athens. During the second session, after the participants had discussed upcoming topics, it became evident from the discussion that before the Joint

Theological Commission could convene, it would be necessary that its members undertake to prepare papers on certain topics which would testify to the identity of the Faith and Ecclesiastical Traditions of both Churches.<sup>60</sup>

In less diplomatic terms, this meant for some that the "monophysite heresy" was still alive and well, requiring further efforts to satisfy critics who were not able to accept the common conclusions of the theologians and hierarchs who participated in the discussions. This was no minor issue, insofar as it would be crucial to establish communion on a "macroecclesial" level, to assure all interested parties (i.e., the autocephalous churches and those associated with them—particularly on the Eastern Orthodox side<sup>61</sup>) that, in fact, both sides enjoyed a fully orthodox, authentically evangelical faith in Christ as the God-Man. Given the divergences of Christological expression on both sides, this objective was a crucial precursor to potential corporate unity between the two Orthodox bodies.<sup>62</sup> Such was the case that at the beginning of the (official) dialogue, the "main item" considered was really yet one more proof of the authentic Christology held by both sides as part of one deposit of apostolic faith. The statement "we agree in condemning the Nestorian and the Eutychian heresies" is telling.<sup>63</sup> Since neither term was used in any of the communiqués "for the record," the omission more than likely suggested to some that commissioners were "soft" on condemning a perceived heresy. They failed to realize, however, that the body of the work contained in the four consultations (particularly Bristol) condemned both of these heresies, if not by name.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, another outstanding contribution had been made toward a commonly acceptable Christological expression, now formally denouncing both (presumed) extremes of Eutychianism and "Nestorianism." At the same time, perhaps, such a new statement would have been a necessity, since the previous accords were technically "unofficial" and a new statement in the context of "official" dialogue might have served to heighten the standing of the conclusions made at the consultations and thereafter. Even today, a number of groups steadfastly refuse to acknowledge the reliability of these positions.

### The Status of General Councils and the Maintenance of Anathemas

With the exceptional achievements of Aarhus and Bristol now secured, at least for the immediate future, the interlocutors and many outside observers could now be effectively disabused of the notion that the Christological differences constituted the main or even a singular impediment for Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox communion. The



emphasis shifted from the "what" of the Christology to the "how" of ecclesiology. Christological unity as *mutually understood and accepted as orthodox* was now, at least for the consultation partners (and later, dialogue participants), more-or-less resolved through a both/and solution. Issues of an essentially ecclesiological nature (rather than Christological) rose to prominence in the consultations, dialogues and other discussions, summarized in the Geneva Consultation "Summary of Conclusions."

Despite our agreement on the substance of the tradition, the long period of separation has brought about certain differences in the *formal expression* of that tradition. [My emphasis.] These differences have to do with three basic ecclesiological issues – (a) the meaning and place of certain Councils in the life of the Church, (b) the anathematization or acclamation as Saints of certain controversial teachers in the Church, and (c) the jurisdictional questions related to the manifestation of the unity of the Church at local, regional and world levels [i.e., one city, one bishop].<sup>65</sup>

These issues have remained essentially unresolved to the present time.

K.N. Khella advanced this problem at the second consultation in his paper "Do the Four Later Councils Prevent Reconciliation of the Orthodox Churches?"<sup>66</sup> In it, he poses a fundamental question regarding the recognition of the post-Ephesine general councils as ecumenical among the Eastern Orthodox, distinguished from the Oriental Orthodox who, essentially, do not: "Is the reception of the dogma apart from the *expressis verbis* recognition of the respective council enough to acknowledge Orthodoxy?"<sup>67</sup>

In this first period of discussion, the issue was drawn with some fair simplicity—ecumenicity versus non-ecumenicity. On its face, this is a crucial question in light of the kerygma for churches which, over the course of the centuries, have given a respectively different status. In no small measure, "ecumenicity" implies an authoritative, universal status to a council, representing the ultimate, collegiate gathering of the supreme teachers in the Church. If such a gathering is held, those who do not participate (i.e., those refusing to do so as an act of dissent, or conversely, those who are deliberately excluded) can be presumed by the convoking authority to be outside of an "official" juridical gathering of the *una sancta*. At the same time, the non-participants might well refuse to recognize the authority of such a council for any number of reasons, not the least of which including the denial that a council is teaching or functioning in an authentic manner. However, a difference existed between the Eastern Orthodox who held to the kerygmatic inter-cohesion of the seven general

councils, on one hand, and the Oriental Orthodox who maintain that the witness of the teachings of the first three councils—supplemented by Patristic and liturgical (i.e., extra synodal) sources—are sufficient.<sup>68</sup> This is, perhaps, more than anything a statement of the question, since it maintains the status quo of either side. The difficulty is particularly crucial when 1) some teachings are concretized in such a way that the *expressis verbis* become the subject of dogma<sup>69</sup> and 2) pronouncements explicitly or otherwise are accorded an irreformable status without distinctions or nuances, particularly expressed in reaction to objectively erroneous or incomplete data. The initial discussion, as is particularly the case at the Geneva consultation, worked the problem from a perspective not of the "what" (of Christology), but the "how" (the medium of explication). Christology was used as the touchstone of the issue, as particularly enunciated by the discussion regarding a distinction between the *horoi* (i.e., the dogmatic decrees) of a council and their canons. Two presenters at the second consultation presented papers on this subject at the second consultation, essentially agree that "articles of faith were authentically formulated with divine authority as infallible and unassailable,"<sup>70</sup> particularly those which issue from general councils and those greater synods (e.g., Laodicea) whose dogmatic authority is recognized at some point. Nicholae Chitescu suggested that a "strict verbal definition of verbal dissonances on both sides will make possible" a realistic presentation for an agreed doctrinal formula.<sup>71</sup> I. N. Karmiris, while not disputing this, suggested rather that an expanded explanation, relying upon traditional definitions, is sufficient to bridge the gap between univocal doctrinal statements (e.g., those of Chalcedon or Constantinople II) and those constructed along the lines of proposed at a Cilician-Armenian synod of 1196–1197.

Definitio et causa quatri Concilii reperitur inter nos quidem concors est cum aliis tribus praecedentibus, idcirco et a nobis iam receptum est," and it adds, "And if the three other Synods are faithful to the first four, we accept them also."<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, the issue of recognition as it has stood would have only three courses for remediation which would require (a) that a renunciation of the ecumenical status of the fourth through seventh general councils by the Eastern Orthodox—which is virtually impossible, given the status they have enjoyed over a millennium, (b) the acceptance of those councils by the Oriental Orthodox—which might be possible, although it would require the wholesale application of a revised hermeneutic, as suggested by Chitescu or Karmiris, or (c) that the status of the councils remain



unchanged and unchallenged (at least for a time), while at least the excommunications could be juridically removed.<sup>73</sup>

### The State of the Issue

If Christology had been the central issue at this stage, however, such a methodology might well have been sufficient, or at least established as a basis for a real concord between the respective positions. Certainly the attempts to reconcile the standing of the general councils started well, but the issue could not be simply characterized as a matter of recognition versus non-recognition. The real work lay in what would be revealed in coming years as a critical hermeneutic derived from the considerations made at Bristol:

Distinction is to be made not only between the doctrinal definitions and canonical legislations of a Council, but also between the true intention of the dogmatic definition of a council and the particular terminology in which it is expressed, which latter has less authority than the intention.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, despite the advances made in answering the challenges posed by individual issues, from the time of the Geneva consultation to the conclusion of the official dialogue series under the JCTD in 1993, nothing has changed regarding the position of the Oriental Orthodox regarding their post-Ephesine conciliar understanding.

To accept any later historical council literally and completely, would not make sense to our people ... To my modest opinion, after reaching a mutual agreement concerning the substance of the Chalcedonian doctrine it should not be difficult to come to terms on the substance of the definitions [italics mine] of the Vth Ecum. Council, since the Oriental Orthodox Churches are firmly and strongly against Eutychianism and Nestorianism.

With respect to dialogue, the issue remains open and unresolved, although both Eastern and Oriental partners were able to jointly affirm by the third formal dialogue session in 1990 that "the first three ecumenical councils form our common heritage."<sup>75</sup> By the forth and final dialogue of the series (Chambésy, 1993) this treatment was more nuanced, stating that it is "generally accepted that the substance of the apostolic faith is included in these councils and the succeeding councils are only a re-interpretation of the first three."<sup>76</sup>

The remaining principal issue, which has been of great concern for most of the post-Bristol discussions, deals with the "problems in relation to certain revered teachers of one family being condemned or

anathematized by the other."<sup>77</sup> To some, perhaps, this would be relatively simple to resolve. The mutual anathemas of 1054, aimed at Cardinal Humbert and Ecumenical Patriarch Michael Cerularius were lifted by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople in late 1965. This event reflected the optimism of the period (also in evidence during and immediately following Vatican II), was obvious in their Joint Declaration which stated that both sides "...regret and expunge from memory—and from the midst of the Church—the sentences of excommunication [in 1054] which followed them ... and consign them to oblivion."<sup>78</sup> Despite the historic witness and value of such a statement for ecumenical rapprochement in general, a state of excommunication *de facto* (and, except perhaps in the strictest sense, *de iure*) still exists between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, such a declaration regarding the anathemas would have to be more than symbolic, reflecting an acceptable canonical and juridical act, whether accomplished formally or otherwise.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, a common position regarding conciliar reception and/or recognition *in toto* being consigned to a secondary position in the discussions, the partners have focused on the lifting of the anathemas. The first significant attempt to resolve this issue occupied the entire course of the one-day Addis Ababa consultation in 1971. The Summary of the Conclusions from the consultation yielded the following regarding the removal of anathemas:

Both sides agree that lifting the anathemas is "indispensable" for mutual unity, even as "essential unity of faith" already exists. (Sections 1 and 2)

Both sides agree and find acceptable that the lifting of the anathemas does not imply or require a recognition of the status of the individuals in question as saints by one side or the other. (Section 3)

Some of the consultors hold that a non-formal cessation of the anathemas may simplify matters or that such may be recognized in a formal fashion after the fact. (Section 4) The Church has the authority to lift anathemas for "pastoral or other reasons" (Section 5) and that the Church "has always the authority to clarify the decision of a [general] Council, in accordance with its true intention. No decision of a Council can be separated from the total tradition of the Church... Dogmatic definitions of each council are to be understood and made more explicit in terms of subsequent conciliar decisions and definitions." Some members also question whether only an ecumenical council could lift anathemas made by a previous one. (Section 6)



"It would appear that in many instances in the past anathemas have been lifted without any formal action beyond the mere reception of each other by the estranged parties on the basis of their common faith." (Section 7) It would also be necessary to remove condemnations in liturgical texts and provide catechesis for popular acceptance of the "purged" texts. (Section 8) Works of church history, manuals and catechetical materials would, likewise, need to be updated and corrected. Texts for worship could be revised and enriched by the common heritage of the churches. (Sections 9 and 10)

The criteria for "sainthood" and the distinctions between those honored with a general, national or regional *cultus* could be studied by theologians and historians to provide "a necessary clarification of the tradition in relation to the concept ..." (Section 11)<sup>81</sup>

This provides an essential summary of the still-unresolved issues at the "macroecclesial" level.<sup>82</sup> A number of these proposals were modified during the period of the dialogues, not so much in basic content, but regarding proposed initiative outcomes and what underlies them.<sup>83</sup> The 1990 Second Agreed Statement provided the first formal proposals (i.e., in the context of dialogue) and strongly reflected those produced at Addis Ababa nearly two decades earlier. In it, the partners confirmed that anathemas and other condemnations made in the past should be lifted "in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two churches can be removed by grace and power of God."<sup>84</sup> In light of this, the partners recommended to their respective individual churches that 1) Both Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches should mutually lift all anathemas and condemnations against their respective synods and Church Fathers who have been anathematized or condemned in past history, and 2) the way in which this is accomplished "should be decided by the Churches individually."<sup>85</sup>

This ostensibly simple recommendation was amended during the fourth dialogue three years later (November 1-6, 1993), and several conclusions were advanced in light of the papers presented by JCTD members.<sup>86</sup> The first report came from the Inter-orthodox Committee (i.e., the Eastern Orthodox sub-committee of the JCTD) which suggested the following, provided here in summary form.<sup>87</sup>

An anathema, even one pronounced by an ecumenical council, can be lifted by a "unanimous panorthodox decision," made through a synodal assembly of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the consent of the autocephalous synods. A precedent exists for such action in the lifting of

the anathemas of Ephesus against John of Antioch by Cyril, without the need to resort to the decision of a general council. (Sections 1-3)

The Eastern Orthodox church may now remove the anathemas issued by the general councils of Chalcedon, Constantinople III and Nicaea II against leading Cyrillians (including Timothy Aelurus, Peter Mongus, Peter Gnaphaeus, Philoxenus, Peter of Apameia, Jacob Bar'adai, "and those who stood with them"). Although these individuals rejected Chalcedon due to "erroneous information" they also condemned Monophysitism (Eutychianism).<sup>88</sup> (Section 4)

The lifting of the anathemas by the Oriental Orthodox, directed against Chalcedon, Flavian, Anatolius, Gennadius, Juvenal, Leo of Rome, Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria and those who "were in communion with them," should take place concurrently with that of the Eastern Orthodox. This mutual action would not only remove all obstacles to ecclesial communion, but would implicitly affirm the acceptance of the post-Ephesine general councils as ecumenical by all parties. (Sections 5-6)

Communion between the two bodies should be established through a "common Act" made by the respective ecclesiastical authorities. The nature of this Act may be determined by the churches by means of (e.g.) an inclusion in the diptychs, concelebration of the heads of the churches, or a synod. The Act should consist also of the issuance of Letters of Peace between the heads of the church, a "solemn reading" of the act proclaiming the reestablishment of communion and a new list of diptychs for the newly re-integrated Church in all dioceses. The Letters should state the following points (a) The Oriental Orthodox recognize the Eastern Orthodox as neither "Nestorian" nor "Nestorianizing," recognizing the latter as thoroughly orthodox; (b) the "interruption" of communion occurred because of "a misunderstanding to the effect that Chalcedon deviated toward Nestorian ideas and that this council—along with the other post-Ephesine general councils—is to be recognized as "ecumenical and orthodox; (c and d) the condemned individuals mentioned above are mutually to be declared free of the anathemas. (Sections 7-8)

Restored mutual communion requires the abolition, through "exact adherence" (*akribeia*) to the ecclesiastical order, of parallel hierarchies in the same district. Nevertheless, this may be permitted by way of *economia* in consideration of nationalistic, linguistic or other pastoral need; in line with "long standing ecclesiastical tradition," the local hierarchies are free to implement solutions made in mutual agreement. (Section 9)



While recognizing and respecting the variety of differences in divine worship among the two groups, a common form for concelebrated Liturgy should be developed by a joint committee of specialists, along with proposals on "obscure (unclear) liturgical issues."<sup>89</sup> Diversity of worship forms provides no right for the establishment of parallel hierarchies. (Section 10)

Sometime after the drafting of this document, a "Response" was made by the members of the JCTD Oriental Orthodox subcommittee, highly critical of many of the propositions contained in the Eastern Orthodox subcommittee's report. It is arguably the most strongly worded dissenting position document issued during the course of the dialogues or thereafter. In part, it states:

We regret to express our deep dissatisfaction about the report presented to us by the Inter-Orthodox Committee on the lifting of the anathemas and the restoration of communion. The language of the report does not appear to correspond to the truth of the mutual understanding and the spirit of concord we have reached in our official Joint Commission meeting at Chambésy 1990.<sup>90</sup>

On comparison with the Second Agreed Statement, the report does add a number of provisions not previously outlined, at least not specifically. While the Oriental side might have little to object to, insofar as these actions would concern only the Eastern Orthodox within their own communion, the former undoubtedly found the Report's tone somewhat aggressive, even patronizing, with its repeated issuance of unilateral "shoulds" going far beyond any prior mutual agreements—or even recommendations. The main points at variance essentially expressed: 1) the Oriental Orthodox reticence with more formalized expressions of union, expressed particularly in clear disagreement with the Report's recommendation of a "solemn reading of an Act," rather than "proclaiming our one communion in a solemn act in the context of a common eucharistic liturgy."<sup>91</sup> The Response reiterates the common position of 1990 in which the respective churches should be able to choose the most appropriate manner by which the ancient anathemas may be removed, in line with proposition 10.c of the Second Agreed Statement.<sup>92</sup> 2) A disagreement with the Eastern Orthodox assessment that the Cyrillian split derived from "erroneous information about [Chalcedon]" and its interpretation.<sup>93</sup> The Response, on the contrary, noted that both communions had "together arrived at the conclusion that it [i.e., the schism] was caused not by any 'erroneous understanding,' but by the differences in formulation of the same truth, aggravated by political and

cultural factors," which were brought to bear in rejection of extremes of both "ultra-Cyrrillianism" on one hand and "hyper-Dyophysitism" on the other.<sup>94</sup> One particularly difficult issue in the Report, the presumption that the Oriental Orthodox would recognize the post-Ephesine councils as ecumenical upon lifting of the anathemas, was cited in the Response as "a major obstacle in the way of realizing full ecclesial communion."<sup>95</sup> While the Oriental Orthodox did not strictly rule out such a possibility in the Second Agreed Statement, they hardly endorsed such a position. This was particularly evident when the Oriental Orthodox stated in the document that the Eastern Orthodox assertion—that the Christology mutually accepted in the rapprochement was that of the post-Ephesine general councils—was "their interpretation."

It seems fairly clear, despite a lack of explicit explanation in communiqués or other official documents to the contrary, that to admit a solemn, formal lifting of the excommunications (particularly on the part of the Eastern Orthodox) or an explicit recognition of the ecumenicity of the post-Ephesine councils (on the part of the Oriental Orthodox) could lead to the appearance that the doctors, Fathers and saints of the other side were not merely now declared to be "in good standing" canonically, but in some fashion were being "rehabilitated"—or worse, that they might have actually been heretical, but would no longer be considered such. (This would particularly affect the Orientals, whose Cyrillian ancestors were generally the "officially" persecuted minority in Christian antiquity by the State Church. Furthermore, and perhaps more to the point, the Oriental Orthodox in their context of rapprochement with the Eastern Orthodox would be "coming home"—rather than a union of two co-equal, Sister Churches. This issue, in particular, has not been raised in any of the post 1993 Chambésy statements by either communion—excepting the Romanian Synodal statement of 1994.<sup>96</sup> Given the progress made by the dialogue partners and the work which continues toward fully healing the rift in communion between the two Orthodox communions, the issue should not be considered insurmountable.<sup>97</sup> While certainly bearing importance for overall union of the churches on the macroecclesial level, the question of conciliar recognition has lost much of its urgency given a more immediate issue, which itself has led to an ecumenical breakthrough: The establishment of limited "quasi-communion" between Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox faithful in Islamic countries.



### The Antiochian and Alexandrian "Protocols"

While ongoing discussion of various Christological and ecclesial issues continues in any number of venues, it is something of an irony that an external threat to the liberty of conscience and the free exercise of religion for Christians in the Middle East has rapidly accelerated the unity process. On November 12, 1991, a joint statement in the form of a protocol was promulgated at Damascus by both patriarchs of Antioch, Ignatius IV of the Greek Church and Ignatius Zakka I of the Syriac Church.<sup>98</sup> This document supports mutual catechetical and theological sharing, including the "enhancement" of student and faculty exchanges.<sup>99</sup> It also calls for joint sessions of the Antiochian synods "according to the will" of each and "whenever the need arises."<sup>100</sup>

The protocol mainly concerns the celebrations of baptism, matrimony, funerals and the Divine Liturgy. It outlines the following prescriptions for shared worship and pastoral care, which in summary provide for the following:

#### In general

- With regard to the faithful belonging to either church, this is to be the "reference and authority" in family legal matters.<sup>101</sup>
- If a bishop from one church and a priest (presbyter) from the other are concelebrating a service, the bishop will always preside, even in the other church.<sup>102</sup>
- If a single priest (or bishop), whether Greek or Syriac, is available to only one community of a particular locality, he will celebrate the divine services for both groups of faithful, including the Divine Liturgies, marriages, as well as the provision of other pastoral care. The presiding celebrant, in the case of "mixed" observances, will keep an independent registration of services and relay the information to the other church. If only a single house of worship is available, each faith group will alternate in usage of the facility.<sup>103</sup>

#### Concerning baptism

- If two bishops (or priests) participate in the service, the cleric proper to the subject will preside.<sup>104</sup> The godparents may be taken from either church.<sup>105</sup>

#### Concerning matrimony

- If two bishops (or priests) participate in the service, the cleric proper to the groom will preside.<sup>106</sup> Canonical witnesses may be taken from either church.<sup>107</sup>

#### Concerning funerals

- If two bishops (or priests) participate in the service, the proper cleric to the decedent will preside.<sup>108</sup>

#### General exceptions

- Either church "shall refrain" from accepting faithful for membership in the other, despite any reason for doing so.<sup>109</sup> Celebrations of Holy Orders cannot include the direct participation of the other church (i.e., as ordaining celebrants), although they should be invited to attend the service.<sup>110</sup> Bishops from both churches who are present at a "mixed" service of worship may not concelebrate if observed as part of a Divine Liturgy.<sup>111</sup>

A similar accord was attained by the Greek and Coptic patriarchates of Alexandria nearly a decade later (April 5, 2001), signed on behalf of the two churches by Patriarch Petros VII and Pope Shenouda III.<sup>112</sup> Like the Antioch Protocol, it reaffirmed the agreements reached through the dialogues (particularly, in this case, those of 1989 and 1990, dealing respectively with Christology and on the removal of the anathemas) and provided a rationale for the promulgation of this new protocol.<sup>113</sup> Unlike the decree of Antioch, which dealt with a number of pastoral issues (including the availability of clergy for effective pastoral care, as well as recognizing the fittingness for members of both churches to share in sacramental and general pastoral ministry), the Alexandria Protocol dealt in greater depth with essentially only one pastoral issue—mixed marriage. It also contextualized the new policy within an anticipatory statement regarding the decisions of the respective Orthodox hierarchies.

But since until now we are waiting for the responses of the Holy Synods of some other churches in both families, the restoration of full communion is not yet reached between the two sides of the bi-lateral dialogue. And due to the pastoral consequence and implications caused by mixed Christian marriages between members of the two Patriarchates of Alexandria, having the majority of their people living in the same countries. Those marriages being difficult to perform in both Churches at the same time or in concelebration. The result is that many sensitivities are created between the two families of the partners of such marriage. Those sensitivities which can extend even after the marriage and may affect the relation between the two communities of churches.<sup>114</sup>

Like the Antioch Protocol, this document (through the decisions of both Alexandrian synods) allows couples coming from the Coptic and Greek churches of Alexandria to marry in either church—with the



understanding that both the man and woman are not from a single patriarchate. An additional provision (not stated at Antioch) requires the couple to have a certificate of membership from their respective patriarchates, a marriage "permit" and a certification of marital status.<sup>115</sup> It does not state whom the proper minister of the sacrament should be, and whether any form of concelebration is permitted. However, the protocol does require that each patriarchate "perform all of its other sacraments to [sic] that new family of mixed Christian marriage," while at the same time retaining the right to withhold the sacraments "to any persons whom [the respective patriarchate] does not find fulfilling its [own] canons according to Apostolic Tradition."<sup>116</sup> The Alexandrian decree is more general in tone than the Antiochian decree, but well within the same frame of reference as a pastoral document.<sup>117</sup>

The protocols together form one of the greatest achievements within the entire body of work produced through Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox rapprochement. They are unique in that they do not make recommendations (as in a statement or communiqué), but are true pieces of synodal legislation for the preservation of the Christian life, equally applicable to both Orthodox bodies (or more specifically, between four specific autocephalous churches of both communions). It seems most unlikely that, outside the political and social circumstances of the Middle East, the protocols could provide a general template or model for other Orthodox communities. At the same time, however, the protocols demonstrate clearly that the sacramental Mysteries can be mutually exchanged on a regular basis between the two bodies. Such an interaction confirms the validity of the sacramental and kerygmatic mandate held equally by the churches, honored by equal churches. The mutual restrictions on concelebration of the Divine Liturgy or direct participation in the conferring of Holy Orders by each other's clergy serve as a reminder that this particular advance toward communion—historic as it is—is a far cry from comprehensive communion. But could it not be said that its implementation has already established a certain, although imperfect, level of communion?

For those convinced that unity is desirable, good and possible, the provision made in the protocols reveals a movement, from rapprochement to reconciliation, at least in a limited manner.

### Beyond Chambésy and the Protocols

It would be an easy matter to conclude that this fairly recent "era of good feelings," characterized by the joyous optimism in evidence

throughout the consultations and the dialogues, simply ran its course by c. 2005. While, by no means minimizing the great amount and quality of research and commentary produced by the inter-Orthodox ecumenical partners, it seems for the present that very little of the excitement or zeal characterizing the consultations and the early dialogues remain today. The once fervent optimism of hierarchs, theologians and so many others who firmly believed that inter-Orthodox unity was just within reach, has since given way to a less vital and more cautious optimism. Perhaps the earlier, more positive attitudes were only natural; after all, in the decade of the first inter-Orthodox consultations the "ecumenical spirit" seemed ubiquitous. (Even outside Orthodoxy, for example, the third session of Vatican II began just one month after the first inter-Orthodox consultation.) It seems reasonable to conclude that this ecclesiological "era of good feelings" supported the relatively rapid success of the first inter-Orthodox Christological discussions. Recognizing, then, the overwhelming lack of response to the work of the JCTD by the majority of the respective Orthodox hierarchies, I do not believe that the more or less stalled condition of the current reconciliation efforts (late 2007) should or can remain, nor necessarily augur a future frozen in vague or vain hope. Nonetheless, a number of serious obstacles have yet to be overcome.

In conclusion of this essay, in attempting to construct a "road map" for a future and comprehensive re-engagement, I would offer series of fundamental questions posed nearly a decade ago by Bouteneff which maintain their validity today:

Clearly, many other factors in our disunity go outside of the theological and beyond the practical. Here the question which is being asked is not "what is theologically and practically proper or viable?" but "*what do we want?*" Do we really want unity, with all the joys and also all the challenges and strains that arise from increased diversity?<sup>118</sup>

If unity at its fullest sense is a goal, including integral, institutional unity—and even if the remaining doctrinal and canonical issues can be resolved—how will this be appropriated among the *laos Theou*? The sad reality, and one by no means limited to Orthodoxy, is that genuine ecumenism—an ecumenism which allows Christians to not only realize the absolute necessity of Christian unity, but to actively seek it and promote it—has yet to be sufficiently integrated in a widespread and "practical" manner among the People of God, clerical or lay. Such a way of life requires an ecumenical way of *living and thinking* among believers. To have any real success at the *macroecclesial* level (i.e., of an autocephalous or autonomous church) it must be even more present to and within the



microecclesial level of the diocese, the parish and the home.<sup>119</sup> If this is attained, it will require a paradigm shift of historic proportions, equal to that of the rapprochement itself.

### Conclusion

If one accepts the validity of ecumenism and its potential positive outcomes, it is not difficult to suggest that all labors for inter-Orthodox unity between 1964 and 1993 produced some astounding benefits. Certainly, the rapprochement has for the most part (at least within the ecumenical community) engendered accord, mutual trust, and a sense that the Chalcedonian and Cyrillian families of Orthodoxy are one in faith, even if lacking actual communion. The monumental achievement wrought through the Alexandria and Antioch protocols certainly is one of the major tangible fruits of this, in no small measure confirming the rapprochement. Nevertheless, the stated goal of dialogue partners and many of the church leaders whom they represented—the restoration of full and integral union on the macroecclesial level—has not been achieved. While reconciliation between the communions is not at least, theoretically unobtainable, a number of problems and difficulties must first be overcome. Metropolitan Damaskinos noted a few years after the conclusion of the last JCTD dialogues that the churches of both communions “enthusiastically received not only the positive results of the Theological Dialogue, but also the perspective of the restoration of ecclesial communion ... declaring the full agreement on the christological dogma as a historical event and expressed their hope that the ecclesial communion will be re-established, with no longer delay.”<sup>120</sup> The Christological disparity has been addressed repeatedly and to good benefit—both in the academy and at the level of formal rapprochement—recognizing that “full and deep agreement”<sup>121</sup> in faith and practice provides an indispensable basis for inter-Orthodox communion. Some of the remaining issues have been raised by the dialogue partners (especially later in the process) and others have become apparent over the course of time. As these issues find a resolution and the solutions bear fruit, ultimate unity will come at a cost, affecting long held understandings and customs which have maintained the fabric of Orthodoxy since the first millennium.

From 1993 to the present, talks and personal contacts have continued. While some have been more successful than others, all of them in their own manner have provided for continued mutual understanding among the ecumenical partners. Indeed, inter-Orthodox communion of a certain

kind has become a reality in some instances, if even in a rather limited manner.

In addition to the as-yet unresolved main problem areas for inter-Orthodox union identified by the JCTD, viz. a mutually acceptable status of the post-Ephesine councils and the disputed status of anathematized individuals, the still-lacking widespread or official recognition of the Christological concords among the autocephalous churches has become a problematic issue in its own right since the 1993 Chambésy dialogue.<sup>122</sup> Other reasons, which strongly derive from religious, cultural or social motivations are at least equally pervasive. These elements exist to some degree within a number of ecclesial bodies, stemming not only from insufficient engagement by a number of the supreme hierarchs and their synods, but because the faithful to varying degrees and for various reasons cannot or will not promote unity initiatives. Yet, the hope and vision of the pioneers of Inter-orthodox unity, and those who have succeeded them, lives on, awaiting the day that the *oikô*s—the whole household of faith—can be more fully restored through renewed trust, discernment and charity.

### (Footnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> The term “Greek” as a general reference to the Church of Constantinople and its daughter churches is somewhat inaccurate; however, it is the common term in English and its use is retained in this essay. The term *Rûm*, found in Greece, the Middle East and Asia Minor, is actually the more precise reference.
- <sup>2</sup> In many instances, particularly in the West and among many Eastern Orthodox, this latter term remains, unfortunately, in general use.
- <sup>3</sup> The twelfth century colloquies between the Byzantines and the Armenians were essentially the last formal attempt to reconcile the churches in the second millennium. See 95-95, above.
- <sup>4</sup> A committee representing the two Orthodox families was formally established under this title and met as such by the second official dialogue session at Anba Bishoy Monastery, Wadi el-Natrun, Egypt (near Cairo) June 20-24, 1989.  
As a matter of historical interest, the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church recommended the name for this Commission (Cf. “True and it is likely that Paulos Mar Gregorios recommended this. (Cf. “Extract from the Minutes of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Held on 1986, February 16-22 at Sophia Centre, Kottayam.”
- <sup>5</sup> The represented nations included Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Romania, the Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, Switzerland, the U.K., the U.S.A., Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia and India.



- <sup>6</sup> "Communiqué of the Joint Commission," Fourth Official Dialogue, in Christine Chaillot and Alexander Belopopsky, eds., *Towards Unity: The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Geneva: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998), 67.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. For the text of the Second Agreed Statement, see "Second Agreed Statement and Recommendation to Churches," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 63.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 67-68.
- <sup>11</sup> I base this on a reading of the available corpus of the statements made by the dialogue partners. As I note in my commentary on post-Chambésy initiatives, there is really nothing new or unusual produced, at least in the plenary meetings of the communions.
- <sup>12</sup> This was a meeting of thirty theologians from both communions which took place at the Rûm patriarchate at Bab Toma (Damascus) between February 2-5, 1998. It is not certain whether these were sent as official representatives or were members of the JCTD. Cf. "The Orthodox Dialogue," <<http://www.lacopts.org/general.php?i.d.=P942>>.
- <sup>13</sup> The discussion will concern essentially those who have emerged as the "major players" in Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox relations. The Churches of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and India, among the latter, have not necessarily withdrawn from the effort for inter-Orthodox unity, but their contributions are arguably less significant than they were during the previous period of consultation and dialogue.
- <sup>14</sup> Both Georgia and Bulgaria became increasingly insular and less tolerant in their extra-Eastern Orthodox relations, leading to the former's withdrawal from their charter membership in the WCC on May, 1997 and October, 1998, respectively. It comes as no surprise, then, that the Bulgarian hierarchy has made no public statement regarding the JCTD and the Georgian hierarchy ruled synodally that the "documents of the [JCTD] between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches [are] 'unacceptable.'" (In "Progress Report on the Joint Commission Between the Two Families of Orthodox: Georgian Church Rejects Dialogue," *Glastonbury Review*—Past Issues, <<http://www.uk-christian.net/newboc/9907.shtml>>.)
- <sup>15</sup> This represents a particularly reactive view, in comparison with the activity of previous years, which is akin to similar movements (particularly among the Eastern Orthodox) which have more or less taken a reactionary view of any number of issues, of which ecumenical endeavors are among the most highly suspect and condemned. (Cf. Andrei Zolotov, "Georgian Orthodox Church to Leave WCC and CEC [Conference of European Churches], ENI News Service, May 26, 1997, <<http://www.wfn.org/1997/06/msg00000.html>>.)
- <sup>16</sup> The Middle East Council of Churches was founded officially in May, 1974 as an umbrella organization for the mutual support of Protestant, Anglican,

- Catholic and Orthodox bodies (excepting the Assyrian Orthodox) in the Middle and Near East.
- <sup>17</sup> This term has been used officially since promulgation of the "Common Declaration" made at Ma'arat Saydnaya February 10-12, 1999. (Cf. "Communiqué of the Meeting of the Subcommittees on Liturgical and Pastoral Issues 2-5 February, 1998, Damascus, Syria," Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland. See also "Common Declaration—Meeting of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches" (Ma'arat Saydnaya, Syria.) <<http://www.lacopts.org/general.php?i.d.=P949/>>.)
- <sup>18</sup> I find the observation of Sister Wardeh Maksour, Melkite Catholic Professor at St. Joseph University in Beirut, to be particularly useful with regard to the unique circumstances affecting numerous Eastern Christian traditions which co-exist in a hostile environment: "Our message is a witness in a multi-denominational and multi-religious society where negative outlooks about others are firmly ingrained in our mind ... Hence, there is a dire need to meet together and accept each other's cultural backgrounds and work together. This is necessary so that each is firmly established in his church and lives his faith sincerely and charitably. As a result, we will then testify to Christ's body and to the unity of Christians in Christ and free what distorts His body so as to be born again through His grace in the Orient." (Op. cit. "Spiritual Edification for Church Renewal and Mission," in *Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bonds of Peace: Fifth General Assembly [Middle East Council of Churches], Nicosia, Cyprus, January 22-29, 1990 [Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 1994] 101.*)
- <sup>19</sup> "Statement of the Russian Orthodox Church on the Official Theological Dialogue," *Decisions of the Holy Synod, Moscow, Russia, December, 1994*, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 44.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. This statement is somewhat obscure. Short of any explanation, and despite its wording, the statement may have indicated that the dialogue partners—specifically those from the JCTD) and interested theologians who were not necessarily part of the JCTD—should be brought into the discussion. Also cf. my above citation from the JCTD Oriental Orthodox Subcommittee, 64.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. The tone of this statement is unfortunate, as it implies a self-appointed hegemony on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate which other Orthodox jurisdictions would undoubtedly find questionable. In February of that year, the communiqué was preceded by a lengthy statement issued by the Synodal Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate. It reflects the pessimism of the communiqué by completely ignoring the fact that the work of the JCTD even occurred. It also complicates the matter of potential unity



between the communions by asserting that the decrees of Chalcedon and subsequent general councils are more-or-less immutable. (Cf. "Le dialogue avec les préchalcédoniens et la réception des conciles: Communication du père Hilarion Alfeiev, à la Commission théologique synodale du Patriarchat de Moscou, 6-7 février 1997," Service Orthodoxe de Presse, Supplément 217, document 217.B. [Avril, 1997].)

25 "Statement of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the Official Theological Dialogue," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 42. This document was part of a letter sent by Patriarch Teoctist to the Eastern Orthodox co-president of the JCTD, Metropolitan Damaskinos. (Cf. Ibid.)

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. This statement is also particularly noteworthy as it further states that the "canonical authority of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon can today be represented by the consensus of the Churches...belonging to the Byzantine Orthodox family as well as to the Oriental Orthodox family." (Op. cit.) This understanding, while undoubtedly reflective of the sentiment of JCTD and the many individuals who support inter-Orthodox unity, would not necessarily be shared by all Orthodox bodies.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid. Even with the passage of a decade, such a statement from any of the autonomous hierarchies is rare, as it implies a certain parity and complementarity between the communions that is far from universally acknowledged in official statements.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Among the delegates, the communiqué notes the presence of Bishop Seraphion of the Coptic Diocese of Los Angeles and Syriac Patriarchal Vicar Metropolitan Clemis Kaplan of Burbank, California. Nine unnamed delegates from the Moscow Patriarchate also participated. (Loc. cit.)

33 In fact, the statement of Patriarch Alexei from the first meeting of the Coordinating Committee, which I provide in the previous paragraph, was reprinted word for word in the communiqué issued for the second meeting.

34 "Third Dialogue Encounter of the Russian and Oriental Orthodox Churches in Antelias-Lebanon," Middle East Council of Churches: On Dialogue of Russian & Oriental Churches, < <http://www.wfn.org/2005/12/msg00228.html>>. The communiqué notes that another meeting of the Coordinating Committee is to take place in early 2007, either in Moscow or Damascus. (Loc. cit.) In the course of researching the various meetings between the partners, I found a reference to a "Second Meeting of The Joint Commission for the Relations Between the Russian Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East" held at the St. Mark Center (Coptic Patriarchate) in Cairo December 15-18, 2004, but it is uncertain how this meeting conforms to the taxis of those currently under discussion. (Cf. <http://www.metropolit-bishoy.org/files/Christology/sitesesverus.doc>.)

35 Ibid. The communiqué's contention concerning the contradictions with "previously established agreements between the two families" does not indicate what these actually are. It may well refer to a cry of foul by the Oriental Orthodox partners, who rightly note that the second and third dialogues did not require the Oriental Orthodox to acknowledge post-Ephesine general councils.

36 "Common Declaration and Message of the Coptic and Armenian Orthodox Church," Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of Los Angeles, etc., < <http://www.lacopts.org/general.php?id=P948>>.

37 Cf. "The Orthodox Dialogue," Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of Los Angeles, etc., < <http://www.lacopts.org/general.php?id=P942>>.

38 The papers presented at the conference and their presenters are as follows: "Interpretation of the Christological Official Agreements" by Metropolitan Bishoy "Pastoral Efforts towards Unity" and a "Bibliography on the Common Roots of Respective Liturgical Traditions" by Father Tadros Malaty "Liturgical Issues and Specific Diversities" by Prof. Joannis Fauntoulis (University of Thessalonica)

39 "On the one hand, we have to push our churches to send their formal responses and on the other hand, we need to discuss the canonical and practical questions—in order to clarify the ambiguities of these complex issues. So this is where we are." (In Hratch Tchilingirian, "A Conversation with Archbishop Aram Keshishian Moderator of World Council of Churches and Prelate of the Armenian Church in Lebanon," Window Quarterly 4 (1994) <<http://www.orthodoxunity.org/article04.html>>.)

40 "Pastoral Agreement between the Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Alexandria (April 5, 2001)," from the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland. The document was signed in Cairo and bears the signatures of Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Petros VII.

41 First Inter-Orthodox Consultation at Aarhus, Denmark, 1964, "The Lesson of History on the Controversy Concerning the Nature of Christ," in Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 (1968): 122.

42 For example, Mar Thoma Dionysius of India expressed a very "traditional" Oriental perspective in this statement: "Those who teach two persons in Christ and those who believe two separate natures after the mysterious union of Christ, we say, are not orthodox, but heterodox." (Cf. "A Statement Made by His Grace Mar Thoma Dionysius, in ibid., 148. Such a remark reveals some lack of understanding of the orthodox position of Chalcedon. At the same time, it is not altogether clear that the Eastern Orthodox representatives were entirely understanding of the Oriental position. One member of the Eastern Orthodox side (Fr. Vitaly Borovoy) noted that, "[w]hen finally I heard Father Samuel saying 'we are not Monophysites,' this was another achievement." (Op. cit., Ibid., 105.) Clearly, both sides it seems, needed to be disabused of their respective prejudices.



- <sup>43</sup> Op. cit., First Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "Discussion: Concerning the Paper of Fr. Meyendorff, in Greek Orthodox Theological Review 10 (1964-65): 36.
- <sup>44</sup> Meyendorff, First Inter-Orthodox Consultation, 1964, "Discussion Regarding the Paper of Archbishop Tiran" in Greek Orthodox Theological Review 10 (1964-65): 131.
- <sup>45</sup> N[ikos] A. Nissiotis, "Introduction," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 (1968), 125. Here, Nissiotis obviously refers to Eastern Orthodox.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 126.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 126.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., 127.
- <sup>49</sup> "Forward," Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 16 (1971): n.p.
- <sup>50</sup> Op. cit., Second Inter-Orthodox Consultation at Bristol, England, 1967, "Discussion: Concerning the Paper of Prof. V. C. Samuel," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 (1968): 152.
- <sup>51</sup> "The Manhood of Jesus Christ in the Tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church," *ibid.*, 163. A comment made by Fr. Nicholas Chitescu's in response to Fr. Samuel's remarks is especially helpful here. He notes that "St. Maximus also emphasizes the fact that the human nature was theokinetos, that the Word moved it and stimulated it to action when, as and as much as, it willed. This does not prevent him from constantly confirming that although the human will of Jesus did not have that liberty which scholastics call *de contrariété* and which the holy doctor call *thelema gnomikon* ... it nevertheless remained truly free under the impulsion of the Word." (In Chitescu, "The Position of Some Orthodox and Roman Catholic Theologians on the Wills of the Person of Jesus Christ and the Problem of Relations With the Non-Chalcedonians," Second Inter-Orthodox Consultation, Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 [1968]: 302.)
- <sup>52</sup> Op. cit. in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 49. It should be noted that Bristol's Agreed Statement carefully uses the modifying clause "does not appear, therefore to be incompatible" when asserting that the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox positions are not in conflict. Given the extensive agreement among the partners, I believe that use of this phrase wisely protected the consultors from any potential criticism that they had pre-emptively made a dogmatic "pronouncement" which would otherwise formally and definitively belong to the hierarchs.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> This answered the challenge posed by some critics after Aarhus regarding the supposed emphasis regarding a preference for either the "One nature" or "the Word Incarnate." The wording of the joint statement, in fact, promotes and upholds the validity of two usages, in the understanding of the same reality of theandric union. (Cf. Chaillot and Belopopsky, 49.) Cf. also "Oriental Orthodox Churches," *Light of the East* 4 (1982), 27.

- <sup>55</sup> Theodore Pulcini, "Recent Strides Toward Reunion of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches: Healing the Chalcedonian Schism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30 (1993): 40.
- <sup>56</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation at Chambésy, Switzerland, 1970, "Third Unofficial Consultation Summary of Conclusions," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 51.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. Fourth Inter-Orthodox Consultation at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1971, in Greek Orthodox Theological Review 16 (1971): 211-213.
- <sup>59</sup> Speaking on behalf of the consultors in 1971, Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum made the following affirmation of their unanimity on the issue of Christology: "At the outset, I should like to say that from our point of view there is no other difference except the recognition by the Ancient Oriental Churches, directly or indirectly, of the proceedings of the last Four Universal Councils. On the other hand, Orientals contend that the Orthodox Churches should clarify certain problems emanating from [them]." (Metropolitan Methodios [Fouyas] of Aksum, "Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian Churches," Abba Salama 3 [1972]: 133.)
- <sup>60</sup> Meeting of the Theological Subcommittees for the Theological Dialogue Between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches," Inter-Orthodox Center, Pendeli Monastery, Athens, 30 July-5 August, 1973, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.
- <sup>61</sup> My research indicates that few if any Oriental Orthodox find fault with the concord; the main opposition seems exclusively to stem from certain Eastern Orthodox elements.
- <sup>62</sup> Cf. Fouyas, 687.
- <sup>63</sup> First Inter-Orthodox Dialogue at Chambésy, Switzerland, 1985, "(First) Agreed Statement of the Joint Commission," Wadi-el-Natrun (Amba Bishoy), June 20-24, 1989, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 60.
- <sup>64</sup> It might seem strange that, in fact, the partners did not condemn Eutychianism and Nestorianism (so-called) by name. Given the particular care the commissioners took not to overstep their authority, which I have already mentioned, it seems more than likely that such an action could have been interpreted by any number of hierarchs in their respective sees as such. Certainly, such an initiative on the part of the partners would have been inappropriate. It could also be said, at the same time, that a positive affirmation of a truth is often more effective than a direct condemnation of a falsity. But given this particular statement (and relying on the historical record), there should have been no real doubt that either a truly heretical "ultra-Cyrrillian" or equally extreme Antiochene Christology was ever in evidence in the belief of the commissioners or their respective faith groups. (Cf. esp. Meyendorff, "Chalcedonians and Monophysites After



- Chalcedon," First Inter-Orthodox Consultation, Greek Orthodox Theological Review 10 [1964]: 25-26.)
- Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "Third Unofficial Consultation Summary of Conclusions," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 51.
- Second Inter-Orthodox Consultation, op. cit., Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 (1968): 278-282.
- Ibid., 281.
- "Summary of Conclusions," Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 52.
- "In the case of Chalcedon, the churches not recognizing it, yet receiving its faith, are doing so because of reasons which are orthodox in nature: among these the anxiety and the fear of innovation in belief in using terms that do not occur by the Fathers; in principle they confess the same belief, in terms they do not want "neither [sic] to add nor to omit" something from the deposit of faith." (Khella, 281.)
- Ioannes N. Karmiris, Second Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "The Difference Between the Horos and the Canons and its Importance for the Reception of the Synod of Chalcedon," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 16 (1971): 79.
- N. Chitescu, in *ibid.*, 128.
- Karmiris, 96. "In the definition and thinking of the four councils, between us, it will be found that we are of one mind, along with the other three preceding [councils]; for which reason we would now receive them." (From Nerses of Lampron in P. Tekeyan, *Controverses christologiques en Arménie-cilicie dans la seconde moitié du XIIe siècle* [1165-1198], Rome: 1930, 63.)
- Krikorian, Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "The First Three Ecumenical Councils and Their Significance for the Armenian Church," copy of hand-typed manuscript from the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.) This still is the case with regard to the position of the Oriental Orthodox partners, who have not offered a new perspective on the problem of reception. (Cf. also the remarks to this effect by Fr. Samuel at Bristol in "Discussion: Concerning the Paper of Prof. G. Konidaris," Second Inter-Orthodox Consultation, Greek Orthodox Theological Review 13 [1968]: 273-274.)
- Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "Summary of Conclusions," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 51.
- Third Official Dialogue, "Second Agreed Statement," n. 8, in *ibid.*, 63.
- Fourth Official Dialogue, November 3, 1993, "A Common Statement Of the Oriental Orthodox Churches Concerning the Lifting of the Anathemata and the Restoration of Full Ecclesial Communion Between the Two Families of Orthodox Tradition, B-4," Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.
- Ibid.

- 78 "Regretter également et enlever de la mémoire et du milieu de l'Église les sentences d'excommunication qui les ont suivis...et les vouer à l'oubli." (From "Déclaration commune du Pape Paul VI et du Patriarche Athénagoras," December 7, 1965, <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651207\\_common-declaration\\_fr.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_common-declaration_fr.html)>)
- While by no means do I minimize the essential significance of this landmark act of ecumenical rapprochement, it is too often perceived as more than symbolic—particularly in the West. Whether it was intended to be more than symbolic by either Pope Paul or Patriarch Athenagoras (and his Holy Synod) could be argued. However, given the fact that a state of non-communication persists over forty years after the action was taken and that no other Orthodox autonomous churches officially confirmed it would strongly suggest this.
- 79 In the case of the 1965 event between the Pope Paul and Patriarch Athenagoras, it is clear that this historic gesture is essentially symbolic, a demonstration of Christian charity and good will offered toward healing the tragic events of 1054. The reality remains that, with few or (in the case of some Orthodox bodies) no exceptions, mutual Eucharistic communion and sacramental sharing in general was not established by the event. By its very nature, the removal of an excommunication implies full and unrestricted access to the sacramental life of a communion of faith by an individual or group. Since neither Catholics nor Orthodox Christians cannot generally "exercise any ecclesiastical offices, ministries, or functions whatsoever or to place acts of governance" (CIC 1331 §1.3) in either's churches, the condition of excommunication cannot be considered to have been lifted between members of the respective churches.
- 80 More specifically, I am referring to the recommendation of the Oriental Orthodox partners who have recommended that the lifting of anathemas could take place in an informal manner (i.e. canonically, but in a less ceremonial fashion), rather than in a formal or liturgical setting. (For a more recent treatment of this among the dialogue partners, see "Response of the Oriental Orthodox Committee," not dated, but issued sometime after the meeting of the JCTD at Chambésy from November 1-6, 1993, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.)
- 81 Op. cit., Fourth Inter-Orthodox Consultation, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 54-55.
- 82 I use the term macroecclesial to refer to those issues of Church faith and life at the highest level—the level of communion.
- 83 It should again be mentioned here that the issue of the lifting of anathemas and the "rehabilitation" of the saints and doctors of the church was consigned to an inferior position for the first two dialogues, which were (for the most part) more devoted to recovering the common Christological heritage of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox. (Cf. The dialogues at Chambésy in 1985



and Wadi-el-Natrun in 1989.) The agenda changed by the time of the third dialogue in 1990, at Chambésy, in which the removal of the anathemas was made explicit in the text of the Second Agreed Statement. (Cf. op. cit., Third Official Dialogue, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 64.)

84 Op. cit., Third Official Dialogue, September, in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 64. It should be noted that the members of the dialogue were, in a sense, premature in their judgment that the removal of the anathemas constituted the "last obstacle." On the context of dialogue, especially given the signal success in resolution of the "Christological problem" within the JCTD, this assessment would be correct. However, given the lack of cooperation or interest from member Churches—or their downright opposition—to inter-Orthodox reconciliation, the priority of removal of the anathemas (as urgent as it is) must cede to the still unresolved problem of complete acceptance of the Christological accords reached in the consultations and confirmed in the dialogues.

85 Ibid.

86 Several papers were presented at the final meeting of the first dialogue series, at Chambésy, by the following dialogue partners and general titles:  
Prof. Vlassios Phidas: "What is the competent ecclesiastical authority from each side for the lifting of the anathemas and what are the presuppositions for the restoration of the ecclesiastical communion?"

Father John Romanides and Prof. George Martzelos: "Which anathemas of which synods and persons could be lifted in accordance with the proposal of paragraph 10 of the Second Common Statement?"

Metropolitan Meletios and Fr. George Dragas; "Which [sic] is the canonical procedure from each side for the lifting of the anathemas and the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?"

Metropolitan George Khodor: "How could we understand and implement the restoration of ecclesiastical communion in the life of our Church?" (Cf. Fourth Official Dialogue, "Report of the Interorthodox Committee: Lifting of Anathemas and Restoration of Communion," JCTD, November 1-6, 1993, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.)

87 Fourth Official Dialogue, "Report of the Interorthodox Committee: Lifting of Anathemas and Restoration of Communion" (hereafter "Report"), JCTD, November 1-6, 1993, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.

88 Ibid. The document I obtained at the Chambésy Archives (presumably a copy of the original draft) has the word "Eutycianism" [sic] inserted by hand next to "Monophysitism," undoubtedly to reinforce the connection of true "monophysitism" (as opposed to miaphysitism) with the "ultra-Cyrrillian" heresy of Eutyches.

89 Ibid. The parenthetical remark was also a hand-written correction made to the document.

90 Fourth Official Dialogue, "Response of the Oriental Orthodox Committee to the Report of the Interorthodox Committee: Lifting of Anathemas and Restoration of Communion," (hereafter "Response") 1, at the meeting of the JCTD, November 1-6, 1993, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archives, Chambésy, Switzerland.

91 Response, 5.

92 The Response specifically restates the Oriental position, namely, that any anathemas issued against individuals of synods will be "generally lifted" without specific mention of names and that such an action may not be construed as giving acceptance to the particular "council, or the recognition of that [formerly anathematized] person as a saint." (Op. cit. 2.a)

93 Report, 4.

94 Response, 3.

95 Ibid., 2.

96 The Romanian synodal statement attempts to harmonize the Oriental Orthodox position stated in the Response with that expressed by the Eastern Orthodox in the Report—although it leans somewhat closer to the latter: "[T]he possibility of the real lifting of the anathemas is to be studied, through the consensus of the Holy Local Councils [i.e. synods] expressed by the signatures placed on common concelebration and Eucharist communion of the Primates of these Churches, gathered together in a joint Orthodox conference..." (Op. cit. 4.)

97 Indeed, this issue alone should not hinder the establishment of a single Orthodox communion *ceteris paribus*, although it remains unresolved in the face of other issues which will be discussed later in this essay and which pose more immediate impediments to authentic reconciliation and integral *koinonia*.

98 Ignatius IV of Antioch and Ignatius Zakka Iwas of Antioch, "A Synodal and Patriarchal Letter" ("Statement of the Orthodox Church of Antioch on the Relations Between the Eastern and Syrian [Syriac] Orthodox Churches"), November 12, 1991, <<http://sor.cur.edu/19911112SOCRumOrthStmnt.html>>. It is particularly worth mentioning that the salutation of the document is addressed not to the faithful of two patriarchates, but simply "of the Holy See of Antioch." (Op. cit.) Clearly, such a form implies (even if not in a strictly canonical sense) that there exists one patriarchal see of Orthodox Christians only, governed by two supreme pastors. This is mentioned again at the end of the preamble in a reference to "the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch" which took responsibility for the "concrete expression of the close fellowship" of the two Antiochene Orthodox churches. (Cf. loc. cit.)

99 Ibid., section 2.

100 Ibid., section 4.

101 Ibid., section 5.

102 Ibid., section 11.



- 103 Ibid., sections 9 and 10.
- 104 Ibid., section 6.
- 105 Ibid., section 13.
- 106 Ibid. It should be noted that, only a priest or bishop can solemnize marriages in any of the Orthodox (and Eastern Catholic) churches—unlike most of the Western liturgical churches (e.g. Roman Catholic, Anglican). Ritually, this culminates in the priestly nuptial blessing. Among Orthodox Christians, this practice affirms the belief that the priest ministers the sacrament of matrimony to the couple, rather than a mutual bestowal of the sacrament by the bride and groom. For an additional treatment of this divergence in practice between ancient Latin and Eastern Christian traditions, see Anne Schwerdtfeger, *Ethnological Sources of the Christian Marriage Ceremony*. Stockholm: Ceres, 1992, 120-123.
- 107 Ibid. section 6.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Cf. *ibid.*, section 3.
- 110 Ibid., section 12.
- 111 Ibid., section 7.
- 112 Loc. cit. The date is not given in this document, but rather in a press release issued from Alexandria on the following day. (Cf. "Pastoral Agreement Regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony Between the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Coptic Church," <http://www.orthodox.net/ecumenism/alexandria-coptic-church-2001-04-06.html#9>.)
- 113 "Pastoral Agreement Between the Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Alexandria (2001)," <http://www.orthodoxunity.org/state05.html#>.)
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Peter Bouteneff, "Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonians: Realizing Unity," *St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary Quarterly* 42 (1998): 165.
- 119 Global communion or the pleroma of communion is the "microecclesial" reality of the Church, expressed at the diocesan-parochial level.
- 120 Metropolitan Damaskinos, "Historical Survey on the Theological Dialogue Between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches: What Has Been Already Achieved," n.d., but composed sometime after March, 1996) unpublished essay, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archive, Chambésy, Switzerland. Based on the text immediately before this quote, Metropolitan Damaskinos uses the term "all" in reference to his visits with the supreme hierarchs of the Eastern Orthodox Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Russian, Georgia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Cyprus,

- Romania, Albania, and Poland and the Oriental Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Armenia (Cilician), and Ethiopia. The absence of other churches would not necessarily imply their disagreement, since some of those not represented in this list were among the most active supporters (e.g., the Malankara Church) and some of those represented, likewise, eventually disavowed the initiative (e.g., Bulgaria).
- 121 Cf. Third Inter-Orthodox Consultation, "Third Unofficial Consultation Summary of Conclusions," in Chaillot and Belopopsky, 51.
- 122 Metropolitan Damaskinos confirmed the acknowledgement of the engagement to that time by three patriarchates: "I want to underline that the three Orthodox Churches, namely, the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Rumania, stated officially their agreement and satisfaction with the results produced in this Dialogue [i.e., the work of the JCTD] and that they await with confidence those developments which will make possible the full communion [sic] between the two Church families." (Loc. cit., "Introductory Address of the Orthodox Co-Chairman," JCTD, November 1-6, 1993, Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Library-Archive, Chambésy, Switzerland.)



## Biblical Reflection

### "To will one thing" Phil.3 : 12-14

Fr. Dr. Abraham Oommen

There is nothing in this world that God has created which does not have a goal. Every movement has an aim. Aristotle called it *Entelechy*. According to him, the basic essence of a thing is its entelechy i.e., having a purpose within itself. The events and developments are due to the purpose or design they are serving. It is the opposite of the chance theory of the universe. The science of Cybernetics or the servo-mechanisms points to this. Human beings are no exception. We act as per our goals, if the goals are not fixed, we waste all our energies. Considering the huge wastage of time, energy and money involved in our earthly existence, is it not right on our part to re-discover our goal and strive for it? This is what the Apostle wants us to do. We just can't afford to go on without fixing our goals.

St. Paul says that Christian life is a process, a race, pressing toward the mark. But before his conversion, when he was called Saul, this single mindedness or the tenacity of purpose was not found in his life. On the contrary there were many things that distracted him. His confidence was not in the single, unique Saviour Jesus Christ, but in many other things. Like most of us, he glorified the non-essentials rather than the essentials, boasted in the accidentals rather than the necessary. (Phil. 3:5,6)

After his conversion St. Paul had a fixed goal. He gave up the accidentals for the essential. In fact there was a revolutionary change in his perspective. Before he was caught by Christ on the Damascus road, he was bound by so many aims - to be known as Pharisee (a doctor of Law), to be known as a Greek and Hebrew scholar, to be blameless in Law, to achieve fame, power and wealth. But the goals of Saul, unregenerated man, the citizen of Tarsus, converged on a single goal Christ Jesus, when he became Paul,

the servant of Christ. To know Christ, to know the power of the resurrected Christ was his only aim, for which he suffered the loss of all other things. (Phil.3:8a). The change was radical like exchanging base, cheap metals for precious ones, like giving up iron for silver and gold. All his earlier aims were just dung, refuse. (Phil.3:8b). As Christians, we also should be able to say like Paul with regard to our fame, fortune, attainments and the status, in the society. They cannot be our real aims. Our real goal should be to know Christ and to communicate him to others. We may have a lot of other aims in life. But we often lose sight of the essential aim of the Christian life, losing sight of the woods in our quest for the trees.

Let us take a close look at the aim of the Apostle. "To know Christ" was his aim. But it was not a knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is "gyan" of Sankara, the ontological, existential knowledge, the "anubhava". Mere theoretical knowledge of Jesus, of the reality, is nothing. Unfortunately all our education machinery is geared only to produce this empirical knowledge without caring a bit for the ultimate reality. We are too much concerned with the rational knowledge to think that there is something or understand beyond our "reason".

There seems to be what is called "the scientific superstition". We often laugh at the superstition of the uneducated man, but what about the superstitions of the learned persons? Many of the top ranking scientists have no qualms to subscribe to the superstitions through some "Yogi" or avatar. The growth of the New Religions Movements in the West is unprecedented. I often wonder how they unite the two opposing worlds - science and superstitions in their minds. Scientific superstition is widespread all over the world. There are scientists who are critical of religious beliefs but subscribe quite uncritically to their own scientific conceptual world. Having banished God and religion from the mind, man usurps the place of God as the people who built the Tower of Babel. Knowledge is considered as amassing a large amount of data, which on reproduction in exams give us a degree. We depend on our reason, our ability to know the things. Will it lead us to the whole truth? Can human reason give us true knowledge?

I think the Indian concept of learning is to be rediscovered. There is no such thing as "pure reason" according to Kant. Reason points to something beyond itself. Reason leads to revelation. He said that if there is no God, we have to invent one for the sake of ethics. We should pass on from technical reason to ontological reason. The conflicts in human reason leads to revelation; to the quest of revelation. Epistemology, or the science of knowledge is a part of ontology. The Indian philosophers saw that real



knowledge is obtained through the union of the object with the viewer. In the act of knowing, the knower and the object that which is known are united. When we say "horse", mind takes the shape of a horse. Mind is like a blackboard; in the beginning there is nothing. When something is written on it we experience.

So "knowing Christ" is to be united with him. When one is united with him, he gets his power. Christ is the ultimate revelation to man. The supreme reality. The omega point towards which mankind is evolving – **Christos Pantacretos**, the cosmic Christ, the all embracing Christ, the Logos. All people need to know him. Once we know him, caught by him as St. Paul says, one cannot remain dormant. Like St. Paul we will be driven and compelled to do something to communicate him to others.

St. Paul reminds that a Christian has not only to find the goal and to keep his goal in sight, but to strive for it. All our energies should be converged to that point, rather than allowing them to lose through dissipation (Phil. 3:14). The reason for our existence is to evolve a new humanity through Christ. But we are often prophets of doom. We curse the darkness around us rather than pointing to the light. We indulge in the gloom rather than raising the ray of hope to the suffering. Unless we try to improve ourselves, to perfect ourselves and become the models, we cannot influence others. The principle of counseling is that the counselor should have the qualities that he wishes to inculcate in others. Unless we have the light within ourselves how can we enlighten others?

A Christian life is always a process of "becoming"; to use another term of philosophy. We cannot be satisfied with what we are. It is a common tendency among the grown ups to think that they have arrived. If a teacher thinks that he has acquired all knowledge, then he is going to fall as a teacher. Life is never static. It is dynamic, on-going process. The greatest gift of Christian faith is that it raises man to the highest altitude. Christianity has an unlimited view of man. The measure of growth is Christ. The miracles of Christ are signs of man freed from the shackles that blind him. Resurrection provides him eternal freedom. Christ changed the whole concept of man. "Christianity reverses all our rational certainties and all our human conventions"<sup>(1)</sup>. The pessimistic philosophy of Heidegger, Nietzsche and Sartre is not acceptable to a Christian. To all the moderners, life is absurd having no meaning, even death offers no solution as one will continue to exist in the minds of others, his body will be fed by the plants and vermins. No use of struggling – suffer it. Existence is irremediably absurd – a tube of which both ends are sealed. True, man

is nothing as the mystic says, but he is moving toward the goal – Christ, Christ on the mount of Transfiguration.

Against Sartre and others, Christianity says life has a purpose. It is a journey to transcendence – from "what is" to "what to be". God is not seeing us as what we are but as what we should be. Man's destiny is to resemble God. There is nothing impossible in this. It is possible to become more like God. Life is not hopeless or absurd. The more one becomes like God, the more human he becomes. Millions of religious people experience this. A new kind of evolution is taking place; as Teilhard De Chardin says, not on the physical, but on the spiritual level. We cannot replace the experience of reality through any scientific prejudice. "Existential development is a perpetual conquest of matter by mind, since its effort moves towards a deeper and deeper spiritualization"<sup>(2)</sup>. Existence is the perpetual "becoming" with no present stopping point (Phil 3:12). Our present is always aspiring for future, it is laden with the past and transform it timelessly. St. Paul himself does not consider himself to have reached his goal. But he has been hastening toward it. Nobody can be called a Christian, Christ alone is a Christian. We are aspiring to become Christians, to be like Christ. To stop at the present is the end of existence.

Existence should lead to Transcendence. It is possible to rise above Heidegger's or Sartre's existential pessimism. We have unlimited scope of accomplishment. Failure or death is not the final word. Aspiration towards God is what keeps life going. Man is given a dignity by faith which is not given by atheism. There is nothing more illogical than a Christian defender of establishment since no order established here on earth can be the Kingdom of God.

All great men were committed to some particular projects. But modern people hate commitment and loyalty – disengagement is the word in fashion. But this is the bankruptcy of the spirit. We are part of the world. We belong to others and to the world. Disengagement should be "self-forgetting" not vice-versa. This makes man avoid fanaticism and sectarianism. There may be many reasons for not getting involved, for not taking risks. But incarnation is to be our model. "A stormy life is attractive to great minds but gives no pleasure to the mediocre"<sup>(3)</sup>. The worst evil that can happen to existence is the loss of passion- apathy. The decisive movement in the fabric of existence comes when it is seized by a great and powerful passion – everything appears dazzling. Life is worth living. We are no longer afraid to commit ourselves, no longer intimated by difficulties and risks, we would rather welcome them.



knowledge is obtained through the union of the object with the viewer. In the act of knowing, the knower and the object that which is known are united. When we say "horse", mind takes the shape of a horse. Mind is like a blackboard; in the beginning there is nothing. When something is written on it we experience.

So "knowing Christ" is to be united with him. When one is united with him, he gets his power. Christ is the ultimate revelation to man. The supreme reality. The omega point towards which mankind is evolving – **Christos Pantacretos**, the cosmic Christ, the all embracing Christ, the Logos. All people need to know him. Once we know him, caught by him as St. Paul says, one cannot remain dormant. Like St. Paul we will be driven and compelled to do something to communicate him to others.

St. Paul reminds that a Christian has not only to find the goal and to keep his goal in sight, but to strive for it. All our energies should be converged to that point, rather than allowing them to lose through dissipation (Phil. 3:14). The reason for our existence is to evolve a new humanity through Christ. But we are often prophets of doom. We curse the darkness around us rather than pointing to the light. We indulge in the gloom rather than raising the ray of hope to the suffering. Unless we try to improve ourselves, to perfect ourselves and become the models, we cannot influence others. The principle of counseling is that the counselor should have the qualities that he wishes to inculcate in others. Unless we have the light within ourselves how can we enlighten others?

A Christian life is always a process of "becoming"; to use another term of philosophy. We cannot be satisfied with what we are. It is a common tendency among the grown ups to think that they have arrived. If a teacher thinks that he has acquired all knowledge, then he is going to fall as a teacher. Life is never static. It is dynamic, on-going process. The greatest gift of Christian faith is that it raises man to the highest altitude. Christianity has an unlimited view of man. The measure of growth is Christ. The miracles of Christ are signs of man freed from the shackles that blind him. Resurrection provides him eternal freedom. Christ changed the whole concept of man. "Christianity reverses all our rational certainties and all our human conventions"<sup>(1)</sup>. The pessimistic philosophy of Heidegger, Nietzsche and Sartre is not acceptable to a Christian. To all the moderners, life is absurd having no meaning, even death offers no solution as one will continue to exist in the minds of others, his body will be fed by the plants and vermins. No use of struggling – suffer it. Existence is irremediably absurd – a tube of which both ends are sealed. True, man

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Sorenn Keirkegaard, the father of existential philosophy, once prayed:

"Father in Heaven: what is a man  
Without Thee: what is all that  
He knows, vast accumulation though  
It be, but a clipped fragment if  
He does not know Thee: what is all  
His striving, could it even encompass  
The world, but a half finished work  
If he does not know Thee: Thee,  
The one, who are one thing and who  
Art all:.. Some may thou give to the  
Intellect wisdom to comprehend that  
One thing to the heart, sincerity to  
Receive this understanding, to the  
Will purity that wills only one thing,  
In prosperity may thou grant perseverance  
To will one thing, amid distractions,  
Collectedness to will one thing; in  
Suffering; patience to will one thing".<sup>(4)</sup>

Let us make this prayer of Keirkegaard our own.

- (1) Soren Keirkegaard, as quoted in **A Christian Philosophy of Existence**,  
Ignace Lepp (Dubin : Logos Books, 1965) P-19
- (2) Ibid P-39
- (3) Pascal as quoted in Ignace Lepp, **op. cit.**, P-137
- (4) Soren Keirkegaard, **Purity of Heart is to will one Thing**, UK Fontana  
1961 PP 191-92

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## From Royalty to Indignity, the Saga of a Victim of Torture

Rev. Raj Bharath Patta

The first chapter in the book of Esther in the Bible has a record of an interesting story of a woman who became a victim of torture at the hands of her husband and ultimately faded away from the records of the Scripture, risking gospel for the sake of gospel. Her saga is a testimony and a challenge for all of us to commit ourselves to be in solidarity with the victims and in pooling support for all the victims of torture today. She is none other but the bold and the beautiful royal queen Vashti.

Her Excellency Queen Vashti, was the royal queen of King Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Ethiopia with over one hundred and twenty seven provinces in his kingdom. The King threw a party to his leaders from all his provinces in order to show his riches of his royal glory and splendour and pomp of His Majesty. Subsequently the Queen also gave a banquet to the women in the palace.

When the party was at its peak and when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he ordered to bring Queen Vashti before the King dressed in her royal crown in order to show the people and the princes her beauty. Queen Vashti, refused to come at the King's command and consequently became a victim of King's anger that even led to her being dethroned as the Queen.

### Queen Vashti, the Victim of Indignity

When the King ordered her to do a catwalk on his royal ramp, Queen Vashti disobeyed the King's order for she strongly believed in her self-respect and self-dignity. For the Queen, her values were more prominent in life and no force or person can neither influence her values nor compel



her to compromise her values. The Queen knew that refusal and disobedience to King's order would cost her a lot, however being conscious of the consequences she was bold enough to stand for her dignity. By refusing to display her beauty, Queen Vashti displayed her inner beauty of self-dignity. Her self-dignity resulted in her to be dethroned, for she became a victim to the forces of indignity and indecency.

### Queen Vashti, the Victim of Patriarchy

For King Ahasuerus, her queen the woman was yet another material thing like that of his riches and wealth. As he showed off the riches of his kingdom to his guests, he thought he could have easily show off the external and physical beauty of his wife Queen Vashti and make his guest happy and joyful. The King did not also realise that beauty and human sexuality are the gifts of God that need to be respected in all solemnity and sacredness. The forces of patriarchy governed him and therefore he could not have respected his wife as his equal partner in life. On listening to the other men folk, he was forced to pass a decree that any woman who does not obey the commands of their husbands will have to face similar consequences like the Queen. Queen Vashti, became of victim of patriarchy.

### Queen Vashti, the Victim of Torture

Imagine the plight of Queen Vashti, who had to be thrown away from her palace to the streets of her kingdom, just for the sake of sticking to her values of self-dignity and self-esteem. She was sent away from her husband's house to the streets and the men of her country would have laughed at her and would have mocked at her and even teased her like, "Vashti, who wanted to be the Mother of Self-Dignity, who wanted to be the forerunner for women's rights is now on the streets without any shelter". She became a divorcee, a single woman and her pains knew no bounds. Patriarchical forces tried to take advantage of a single woman that too of the one who was a queen, and Queen Vashti would have underwent a trauma and torture, which was unbearable and unexplainable. Added to her pain, when the King called for fresh applications to the post of his wife and the news whoever pleases the King would be made the Queen instead of Queen Vashti, would have added fuel to the fire to the torture she was undergoing then. There would have been a great mental agony and emotional torture for Queen Vashti. In all silence and in all loneliness she bore the torture in her life, just for the sake of values and principles in life. There would not been any space for her to share or ventilate her feelings, all her feelings could have been

blocked up and piled up within her. If I may be allowed to stretch my imagination, I would probably think Queen Vashti would have died a death out of torture from all quarters of her life and therefore that would have been one for the reasons for not finding her name or a mention of her again in the Scriptures. From royalty to indignity, the saga of torture of Queen Vashti goes on and even continues in many lives of the women today.

Queen Vashti's saga of torture comes afresh to all of us. Even today many Dalits are beaten up, ostracised, humiliated and even killed. Dalit women's plights way above words, Every day several Dalit women are raped, abused and are murdered. Dalit Children have been one of the worst victims of child labour, most of them are undernourished and have been used and abused in life. Dalits continue to be the victims of torture today. Violence on Dalits has been a common phenomenon and the discrimination of Dalits over the years has become subtle and aggressive. Dalit Christians are in the arena of torture for neither the legislature nor the judiciary have been listening to their pains and doing justice to them. Sixty years of waiting for justice; imagine their trauma of victim-hood. Torture has become the common denominator with which all Dalits in India are living today.

We are called to be in support to the victims of torture, and in the light of the Queen Vashti's saga of torture, who really did come in support of Queen Vashti, the victim of torture? The Scripture is absolutely silent on it, and no wonder, none would have dared to come in support of the dethroned Queen. As a victim of torture, Queen Vashti had to stand all alone and in all loneliness. Who dared to come in support of her? ...None of her relatives would have come in support of her fearing the King's decree, none of her friends came in support of her, none of her prayer partners came in support of her, none of her community members came in support of her, none of her temple partners came in support of her, none of the royal wives of the princes in their provinces came in support of her, none of the kingdom authorities like the women welfare ministries came in support of her, none of her co-women in her provinces came in support of her (how sad the kingdom spread from India to Euthopia, and there was none to be with her and stand for her), no one came in support of her for every one feared the wrath of the king. Queen Vashti had to live support-less and had to live in all torture all through her life, what a torture it would have been. Unbearable and unthinkable!

There are many Vashti's today in our societies who are living a torturous life. Queen Vashti eventually vanished from the story of the Scriptures,



but I think her life, her witness and her spirit continues to call on all of us today to be in support of all those victims of torture, like those people who are kept in illegal detention, people who are tortured in the name of caste, abused physically and verbally, beaten, intimidated, threatened, false cases imposed, money extorted, etc. Let us express our solidarity with these victims and resolve today to address these strategies of victimhood with a commitment to justice. Queen Vashti calls for a response of prevention, reduction and elimination of all forms of torture today and strive for a just and transformed society. Come, let us stand in solidarity and support the victims of torture from this day on, let us enlarge our tents in bringing in support to these our fellow brothers and sisters who are living in abject torture and trauma.

*Rev. Raj Bharath Patta is the Executive Secretary, Commission on Dalits at National Council of Churches in India.*

## REMINISCENCES

### HIS HOLINESS BASELIOS MARTHOMA MATHEWS II

Kochu Koshy I.A.S.

Being asked to write an article about H.H. Mathews II, Catholicos, has created in me mixed feelings of my sad memory of his exit and a great admiration for his unique personality.

I remember the first occasion when as Thirumeni, he arrived at my official residence near Kollam beach in the second half of 1962. I had already taken charge as the Collector and District magistrate of Kollam and had just moved to a good bungalow. I was not aware as to who the distinguished guest was, but respectfully received him as a Bishop. He introduced himself as Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop of the Orthodox Church in Kollam. Our association which commenced then had developed into a sincere intimacy for decades since then, but was cut off 3 years ago with the sad demise of Bava in 2006. Even so, the image of the tall personality of His holiness, with a visage radiating the brilliance of divine Grace and heavenly Peace continues to remain in my mind as fresh as ever. However, in this article, I would not like to dilate upon many events associated with this saintly Thirumeni and myself during the last four and a half decades, but mention only a couple of episodes which depict some of the fundamentals of the character of this beloved Thirumeni.

First of all, let me recall the sudden deterioration of the inter-communal harmony in Kerala after the discovery of a Cross in the Nilakkal area of our state in 1983. As a former Home Secretary to the Government. and also a former District Magistrate of Kollam, I was worried about the possibility of terrible bloodshed if the old communal harmony somehow collapsed in Kerala. All the Christian Churches and Hindu societies reacted to the new situation in such a way as to threaten to snap the thread of our inter-religious tranquility any time. He and there in our state, small groups of annoyed people started openly challenging local amity. A ticklish situation which was unknown to Kerala seemed to be fast developing. If



this was not nipped in the bud, it could develop into an uncontrollable explosion reminiscent of preparation of violence in upper India which had affected the whole nation in 1947-48. So the Heads of various Christian Churches formed a Committee of Prelates and others under the chairmanship of Kurilos Thirumeni who was Niyukta Bava at that time-I was also a member of this committee. Kurilos Thirumeni after conducting a few meetings felt that a personal and intimate meeting between him and the well-known Chengottukonam Swamiji who championed the cause of the other side could perhaps bring about some understanding. Immediately, I informed my friend and close neighbour and former Speaker/Minister Sri Damodaran Potti about the desire of our Thirumeni and Sri Potti at once contacted the Swamiji and we got a positive response. Sri Potti was also the President of all India Ayyappa Seva Sangham.

The next day was the crucial day for the discussion. It was the first day of Chingam, the beginning of the Malayalam era year 1181, an auspicious day-Swamiji reached the house of Sri Potti at C-18 Jawahar Nagar on time and Niyukta Bava thirumeni also reached my house at C-20 Jawaharnagar in time. I rang up Sri Potti in the adjacent house and informed him about the arrival of our Thirumeni in my house where upon Sri Potti told me that he would soon come to my house along with the Swamiji for discussion. But Thirumeni quickly intervened and asked me to tell him that they need not come over to our house, but we are going to their house for talks. Very soon we reached their home in house no:C-18 in the adjacent plot of Sri Potti. As we entered the Illam of Sri Potti, Swamiji came forward and embraced our Thirumeni. Antharjanam and children of the house received blessings of their distinguished guest. They told Thirumeni that his visit to their Illam by a holy person on the first day of Chingam was an indication that they would have a happy New Year from this date. The discussion started in a very cordial manner and lasted for over a couple of hours and ended quite satisfactorily. Thirumeni had won their hearts and saved Kerala from a possible tragedy of communal strife.

The second episode I wish to refer to was a discussion I had with Bava Thirumeni over 20 years ago at the instance of some friends of the Managing Committee of St. George's Cathedral at Trivandrum. Few people are aware of this as I have not mentioned it outside our house. I left for kottayam by train, early morning one day, leaving my car inside the car park area of Trivandrum Railway Station. During discussions with Thirumenia at Devalokam, I found that my views were slightly different from those of Thirumeni and at some stage of discussion, my voice became a wee bit louder by a decibel or so. Immediately I cut short and felt that I should not have done so. I returned to Trivandrum by train at night and walked to the dark parking area to take my car. But the car would not

move forward or backward as if it was tied down to some strong peg on the ground. The men in charge of the parking area helped me with torchlight to find that when the car was being parked in the early morning, it had run over an invisible iron peg between the front right wheel and the mudguard with great difficulty, they helped me to extricate. But my conscience was whispering to me that I have done wrong to the Supreme Head of our Church and that I was getting just a warning not to repeat it in future.

Two inferences follow from the two aforesaid episodes. First, when a nation faces a crisis, the subtle ability to understand its full significance is available only to a small number of people because a higher level of intelligence is required to grasp it and this was available to our Thirumeni in abundance. In a different strain this may be called Statesmanship and not Politics. But I have seen our Thirumeni being respectfully received by both, the politicians and statesmen alike. The second inference is that some holy men who may appear to us as very ordinary people may indeed have super human capabilities. Our Thirumeni was one such extraordinary person. Long ago, he had quietly chosen his own burial ground on the shore of the pure-water Sasthamotta Lake. He had built up that area as a sanctum sanctorum for his holy sepulcher.

Now, let me conclude by mentioning a very smart reply given by Thirumeni to a press reporter who asked him an inconvenient question at a press-meet, about a decade ago, at Baroda, Gujarat. My eldest son, C.K. Koshy IAS, who was Additional Chief Secretary of Gujarat State in those days had facilitated the visit of our Thirumeni to Gujarat. Open discussions on the Ram Janma bhumi was a topic of popular discussions. At a press conference, Thirumeni was asked a mischievous question by a press man as to what was the opinion of our Thirumeni about the birth place of Sri Rama?

Without any hesitation, Thirumeni gave a very smart reply to the questioner. He answered that the birth place of Rama should be in the hearts of everybody, a reply wildly applauded by the audience.

Long live the memory of His Holiness!



## ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

### Speech delivered by H.G. Thomas Mar Athanasios on the Occasion of the "Consecration of Holy Chrism" of the Armenian Orthodox Church held in the Mother See of the Holy Etchmiadsin, 2008 September 26-30

Your Holiness, Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of all Armenians Ecumenical Patriarch His All Holiness Bartholomew I. Your Excellencies Mr. Prime Minister, Your Graces, Rev. Fathers, Venerated Monks and nuns, distinguished guests, and beloved pilgrims of the Apostolic Church in America.

First of all, I together with the Apostolic delegates from the Malankara Orthodox Church bring to you the Apostolic blessings and greetings of H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Didimos I, the Supreme Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan of India. The Supreme Catholicos and the pilgrims of the Church in India would be glad to greet everyone here in the name of the Holy Trinity-One true God.

For all of us, this is a moment of great joy and thanks giving. This is a time of spiritual gratification and national pride. This is a very historic day for Armenia and for the Armenian people who are privileged to be the devoted children of this blessed land. This is the day when the Armenian Church all over the world rejoices. The Orthodox Church in India, one of your sister churches feels grateful to God for having shared a common faith. Also the Orthodox Church in India cherishes the beautiful and spiritual memories of the pastoral visits of former Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchs to India. It was during the visit of H.H. Vaskan I the new Catholicate Palace and the new block in our Theological seminary were inaugurated by H. Holiness. The Malankara Orthodox Church was very active in the Ecumenical movement right from its inception and very active now with the Armenian Church and other Oriental Orthodox Churches. The contribution of the Late H.G. Paulos Mar Gregorios, H.G. Philipose Mar Theophilos, Rev. Dr. V.C. Samuel and now that of Rev. Dr. K. M. George all members of the Malankara Orthodox Church will always be remembered in the Ecumenical circle.

Your Holiness Karekin II the members of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church remember with gratitude that in 2006 a memorial service was held in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadsin, in the presence of the members of the

Joint Commission of the Theological dialogue between Roman Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches in memory of H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews II. From the bottom of my heart I thank you Your Holiness once again.

Permit me to say one more word. Your All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in his talk last night mentioned about the agreement reached between the Byzantine and Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Pan Orthodox Christendom. I request in all humility to Your All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Your Holiness Karekin II. to make all possible efforts to bring the two families together at the Eucharistic table of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at the earliest.

In our liturgical texts Holy Muron is described as the Holy fragrance of Christ, the seal and symbol of true faith and the culmination of all spiritual gifts. The faithful are initiated into the priesthood of Christ and of the Church through anointing. Through this consecration we have all been called upon to be like Christ. The essential truth of the consecration of the Holy Muron is realized in the Christianization of our lives, and in our becoming Christ like with the help of the Holy Spirit.

There is an ancient tradition behind the use of the Holy Muron for anointing just like the use of water in the Baptismal Sacrament. In the Old Testament we read of Kings, Priests and Prophets being anointed with Holy Oil. In the New Testament, the coming down of the Holy Spirit on some one is referred to as anointing (1 Jn 2:27; 2 Cor 1:21; Lk 4:18)

The Gospel proclaims that Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit anoints us so that we can partake of Christ who is Priest, King, and the Prophet, all at the same time.

The sweet smelling oil specially prepared with a certain days of fasting and prayers and sanctified is the Holy Muron. The process of preparing and consecrating Holy Oil helps us to sanctify ourselves and to spread the sweet and Holy smell wherever we go. May God the Holy Trinity the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit shower His blessings in abundance upon everyone gathered here. May God bless Armenia and especially the Holy Armenian Church, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of All Armenians, Bishops, Priests, monks, nuns and the Holy pilgrims of the Apostolic Armenian Church.

Thank you all once again. May God bless all of us.

H.G. Thomas Mar Athanasios is the Metropolitan of the Chengalur Diocese, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.



## INTERFACE

An interview with Fr. Dr. K.M. GEORGE by FR. K. GEEVARGHESE, St. Thomas Aquinas Pontifical University, Rome Towards the end of the Synod of Bishops, Vatican. 5-27 October 2008.

### WORD OF GOD IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH: CATHOLIC BISHOPS SYNOD AT THE VATICAN

**Fr. K. Geevarghese:** You are attending the General Synod of Catholic Bishops as a "Fraternal Delegate" of the World Council of Churches. Would you tell us something about the Synod?

**Fr. K. M. George:** Convened by Pope Benedict XVI, the General Synod of Bishops is meeting at the Vatican for three weeks, 5-27 October 2008. Some 250 bishops representing the Roman Catholic Church all over the world are presently in the Synod. They have been delegated by their Regional Episcopal Conferences, local synods or directly nominated by the Vatican. They are expected to reflect the pastoral needs and aspirations of the Catholic faithful across the globe.

**K. G:** What is the major focus of the Synod?

**K.M.G:** The main theme for deliberation is the **Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church**. Pope Benedict wants to create a spiritual renewal in the Catholic Church on the basis of regular reading and meditation of the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures. Probably he wants to revive the age-old practice of the Fathers, Saints and monks of the Church who continually and prayerfully meditated on the Biblical Word of God as central to their theology and spirituality. The devotional reading and meditative study of the Bible is called *lectio divina* in the Latin tradition. The heart of the monastic life was *lectio divina*.

**K. G:** What are some of the things the Synod plans to bring about the Biblical renewal?

**K.M.G:** The plan includes a wide spectrum of activities ranging from encouraging every Catholic family to have a Bible at home and reading it daily to new Bible translations adapted to the needs of the faithful in different contexts. Revision of the present lectionary, preaching of the Word by the priest and lay people, Seminary curriculum on Scripture studies, catechism on the internet and many other areas of life in parishes

and mission fields will be re-examined in order to create or strengthen a Bible culture in the Catholic Church.

**K.G:** Could you tell us something about the practical methods of the Synod's working on the main theme?

**K.M.G:** Already, some two years ago an outline called *Lineamenta* of the theme is prepared and published in the major world languages. At various levels of the Church, this draft outline is discussed. Then, on the basis of such discussions a small book on the theme, called *Instrumentum Laboris* (Instrument of work), is published in different languages. This is sent to all participants a year ago for their study. All the discussions on the Synod will be based on this book.

Then there are small groups. The Synod is divided into 12 discussion groups. They meet several times during the Synod and bring up practical proposal and recommendations. These proposals, literally hundreds, will be brought to the plenary synod for discussions before the final document of the Synod is proposed.

**K.G:** What happens to this final document?

**K.M.G:** It is submitted to the Pope who decides on what proposals and recommendations should be accepted. The Pope then will send an authoritative pastoral letter summarising the Synod's work and giving directives regarding the steps to be taken to implement the final proposals at the level of dioceses and parishes.

**K.G:** You also attended the Asian Bishops Synod at the Vatican in 1998 convened by the late Pope John Paul II to prepare for the new millennium. What is your general impression about such synods?

**K.M.G:** To the best of my knowledge, Catholic Bishops Synods convened by the Popes are the most disciplined ecclesiastical meetings of their kind. In terms of preparation, organisation and practical results they are unique.

**K. G:** Is there any special urgency to have a Synod on this theme of the Word of God?

**K.M.G:** The Roman Catholic Church is facing a major threat from Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Charismatics, and various Christian sects. Many Catholics leave the Church and join such groups. Their main tools are the Bible and their own interpretation of biblical teachings. The Latin American countries, for example, are all traditionally Catholic. But some people think that very soon the Catholic Church will be a minority there since large numbers of people are joining the neo-evangelical and various



sectarian movements. So the Catholic Church wants to counter such movements by reviving the right biblical awareness among people.

**K.G.:** *When did the Roman Catholic Church start such regular synods?*

**K.M.G.:** It was Pope John VI who instituted a permanent secretariat for synods. Now there is a special Synod hall on the side of St. Peter's Basilica with all modern facilities. It is named after Paul VI. Before, the Synods or Episcopal Councils were not a regular event in the life of the Roman Church. For example, the famous Second Vatican Council (1963-65) met about 100 years after the First Vatican Council.

Pope John Paul II was enthusiastic about holding synods, because they expressed the principle of 'collegiality' so essential to the church's life. There is certainly the influence of the Orthodox Churches in this since they insist on episcopal collegiality as fundamental to the governance of the Church. Collegiality is the spirit of togetherness when the bishops like the Apostles think and act as one body through mutual understanding and exchange of constructive thinking. This is expected at all levels of the Church from parish council to the synod.

**K.G.:** *What is the relation between the Pope and the Synod?*

**K.M.G.:** In the Roman system, synods have only a consultative, advisory status. It is the Pope who makes the final decisions. So Synods are not in fact decision making bodies. This is different from the *Eastern Orthodox* tradition where synods are decision-making bodies. Patriarchs and Catholicos are subject to their synods though they can in effect lead the synod with personal charisma, vision and general acclamation. However, the primacy of the head cannot be in conflict with the principle of collegiality. The Roman Catholic Church now wants to combine the absolute primacy of the head, namely the Pope, with the ancient principle of episcopal collegiality. The Orthodox Churches do not agree with the Roman understanding of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as successor of Peter.

**K.G.:** *What is the role of the Pope in the actual sessions of the Synod?*

**K.M.G.:** The Pope is of course the President of the Synod. Though he occupies the Presidential chair, the Pope normally never speaks during the official sessions. He has delegated 3 Cardinals to run the meeting. They take turns as the Delegated President of the Synod. Then there is a General Secretary, usually an Archbishop, who coordinates the whole thing and sits on the Podium together with the Pope and the Acting

Presidents. The Pope leads the prayers and may speak unofficially after the sessions.

**K.G.:** *How do the bishops express their opinions?*

**K.M.G.:** Every bishop will be given five minutes to speak. The text of the speech should be prepared in advance in black and white. If any bishop exceeds the allotted time, be it a Cardinal or Archbishop, the microphone will be cut off. An electronic time counter handles this. The Fraternal delegates are also given the opportunity to speak. But when they speak time counter is not on. So even if they exceed there is no problem. This is the great courtesy to the guests. But fraternal delegates never abuse this privilege.

**K.G.:** *What about the group discussions?*

**K.M.G.:** The group discussions are very fruitful, because everyone can speak freely there. The proposals and recommendations are formulated by the group.

**K.G.:** *Are there disputed issues and heated arguments in the Synod?*

**K.M.G.:** No. The Roman Catholic system exercises strict control over the agenda and the arguments. Bishops seem to be very careful not to offend the higher authorities. The Pope's personal presence adds gravity to this atmosphere. The general policy appears to stick to rather conservative and well-guarded positions. Bishops from economically backward regions like Africa, Asia and Latin America seem to be particularly attentive to the central policy of Rome for obvious reasons.

**K.G.:** *What are the languages used in the Synod?*

**K.M.G.:** Latin is the official language. Major documents are presented in Latin. Then Italian, French, English, Spanish and German are used with simultaneous translations.

**K.G.:** *Since you have attended the two Synods conducted by two different Popes, would you draw a comparison between John Paul II and Benedict XVI?*

**K.M.G.:** It is not fair to compare these two great personalities. My knowledge about them is extremely limited. So what I say is my rather superficial impressions.

Pope John Paul II who convened and presided over the Asian Synod of 1998 was certainly a charismatic leader. He would mingle freely with the bishops and other delegates once the official sessions are over. He



would also make short comments before and after the sessions. He always betrayed some humour and human warmth. Paul II in 1998 Synod invited groups of 12 bishops every evening to have supper with him. He invited us four fraternal delegates in that Synod to his private dining room in the Papal apartment to share supper with him. He chatted most informally with us. These are certainly human gestures that carry much positive meaning.

I don't know if one can say such things about the present Pope. He is a highly learned academic and apparently rather shy about meeting people. These are questions of individual temperaments and inclinations. One should not judge too hastily.

**K. G:** *Is there any highlight of the Synod that you want to mention?*

**K.M.G:** On 18<sup>th</sup> October the afternoon session of the Synod was held in the famous Sistine chapel where Popes are elected by the conclave of Cardinals. The Ecumenical Patriarch H. H. Bartholomew addressed the Synod. He made an excellent theological contribution from the Orthodox perspective on the theme of the Synod. Pope Benedict led the canonical evening prayer in Latin. The readings were in Greek by an Orthodox deacon. Patriarch Bartholomew gave the final benediction in Greek.

It is the first time that an Ecumenical Patriarch or any head of another Church, is invited to speak at the Synod of the Roman Catholic Bishops. It was also a unique experience to meet in the Sistine chapel beneath the majestic paintings of Michelangelo- the creation of Adam and the Last Judgment.

**K. G:** *Is there anything other Churches can learn from the experience of this Catholic Synod of Bishops?*

**K.M.G:** Certainly, other Churches can learn a great deal from the Synod. I think the final document of the Synod should be studied by the Synods and higher bodies of Orthodox Churches, because the concern, the context and content of the main theme are equally applicable to the life of the Orthodox Churches as well. This common sharing would be an excellent ecumenical opportunity.

**K. G:** *Would it be a good idea for the synodal meetings of all Churches to invite others as fraternal delegates and observers?*

**K.M.G:** Yes, I think very much so. Synods except the Ecumenical Councils or Universal Synods are essentially internal to the life of a particular Church. In this sense, obviously the Roman Catholic Church closely

monitors the preparation, the process and the outcome of their Synods. This is quite natural. But the fact that they invite others also to be involved to some extent in the actual synodal work gives it a far wider dimension. This holds some promise if taken in the right sense. The hospitality of the Roman Catholic Church towards the fraternal delegates and other guests is exemplary. The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and its head Cardinal Walter Kasper, Bishop Brian Farrell and Monsignor Johan Bonny all take it as a matter of genuine Christian fellowship and ecumenical interaction.



## BOOK REVIEW

Gregorios, Paulos, *Science, Technology and The Future of Humanity*, (Delhi : ISPCK & MGF, 2007). Pages 172, Rs. 150/-  
US \$ 9, £ 7 by Fr. Vineeth Koshy

The developments in science and technology have brought unanticipated and astounding revolutions, making the old mysteries resolved but giving birth to new challenges. Science and technology has so much authority that it can not only determine our present but also shape our future. This book grapples with some of these debatable issues and Mar Gregorios painstakingly analyses all the nuisances involved from different perspectives – the optimists, pessimists and the realists themselves. The author has endeavored to lift the issue out of the dilemma and agenda of politics in which it is now aired and places it in a rational milieu of science and religion dialogue. Although the readers may have been already exposed and aware about these concerns; the author has beautifully crafted and re-looked at these issues with new insights.

The author begins with the question along with others that when there are many other burning issues in society, the discussion of science, technology and future of humanity is a diversionary tactic to avoid criticism against North Atlantic countries that are mainly responsible for the present injustice around the globe. In the chapter, *Humanity, Nature and God*, Mar Gregorios starts his discussion from the consequences of the modern man's binary vision of 'subject' and 'object' dualism. This is a consistent and underlying premise that is restated and discussed throughout the book and explains the interconnectedness and undergoing transformation through renewed understanding of matter. In *Humanization as World Problem*, he reflects that God's transcendence and immanence gets united in humans in a special way thus it makes all the confining limits except that of creaturehood, though it poses a serious problem to define the true essence of human and human nature. The fourth chapter is on the *Science, Technology and the Future of Humanity*, where he disposes off the common myths about science like; science is proven knowledge, sole way to understand reality etc. Again he questions the integrity of scientific enterprises, where mostly the findings of scientific research are diverted to main defense establishments and large corporations. Chapter five discusses about the *Emerging Consciousness for*

a *New Humankind*, where as a Christian he wants to experience oneness with God and with this universe, as humanity proceed on the quest of realizing oneness with all, he wants to be doubly concerned to carry the rest of humanity and its alienated consciousness with him.

In the chapter *The Ecological Crisis and the Quality of Life*, Mar Gregorios tries to go beyond the ordinary understandings of the ecological crisis or mainly in terms of pollution of natural resources. He points out that present ecological crisis is more because of the triumphalist anthropology based on creation story. However he offers an alternative approach for the restoration of the glory of creation through a sacramental vision towards nature that is the meaning and purpose of nature is not exploitation rather manifestation of goodness of creation. The chapter on *Some New Testament Foundations for a Respectful Approach to the Created Order* reaffirms the Biblical teaching especially with the teachings of St. Paul that God intervenes not only in 'history' but also in 'nature' too and therefore redemption is not confined to human souls alone but the creation too. The *Nature of Nature* begins with the paradox and the dilemma involved in an exclusive and inclusive view of nature, where exclusivist idea leads to crisis and on the other hand inclusive view holds hope for possibility of survival of humanity. He thus glides through Gita, Old Testament, Patristic writings, Greek philosophy and interprets that it greatly depends upon the importance of the context in which these terms have been used and interpreted.

The ninth chapter reviews *An Eastern Orthodox Perspective of Nature, Man and God*, begins with the understanding of nature in three views; one, man's participation in nature is integral to it, second man's representation of nature as its priest and finally man's transformation of nature to conform it to the good. He disposes off then the views that God and world are two different entities or both are same and also the question about God's existence is meaningless, since every created 'is-ness' is contingent upon the uncreated 'is-ness' of God, thus nothing is except in contingent relation to God's 'is-ness'. Explaining at length the negativity of science, he criticizes Fritjof Capra in *The Captivity of Science* for he was not shrewd enough to see the political and economic injustice within which science develops and his insensitivity to these issues which makes his analyses less useful and relevant for Asian context. However he is also not too pessimistic, by guaranteeing that science alone can help the world to feed itself properly, to be in good health, to have peace, to be decently clothed, to live under a proper roof, to communicate with each other, to use leisure creatively and to have energy and knowledge to do all this effectively.



In the chapter *Scientific Temper*, he quotes Ashis Nandy for what basically scientific temper means and what it should contain; for example like the scientific temper is not above human dignity and welfare, the evaluation of scientific temper must necessarily contribute the human welfare and dignity etc. In science-religion dialogue, he reflects from Ashis point of view that we must refrain from comparing pure science and corrupt religion or pure religion with corrupt science which may lead to distorted views and false outcomes. In *The Religion of the Scientist* speaks at length about various writers and their best sellers how they provide scientific theories, explanations, facts and figures about origin of universe and tries indirectly to prove the absurdity of religious understandings. The chapter on *Heritage versus Technology* points the inevitability of confrontation and effects of culture and technology and therefore he accuses science and technology eclipsing humanity from its own view. Science and technology shouldn't shape the identity of humanity. For the fulfillment of this dream he advocates two preliminary conditions, first, the establishment of just, peaceful and ecologically sound societies and secondly the creation of a deeper awareness of the true nature of scientific and technological enterprise.

The final chapter on *Heritage and Technology*, Mar Gregorios argues that science is no longer seen as 'objective' truth rather now is seen as 'subjective' theory; and no longer is science called as proved truth, since its observations are based upon availability of present knowledge and subject to reformulation in future. He points that science and technology has fundamentally altered values and ethos of cultures of West and now continuously transforming wherever the science and technology is introduced. Therefore in the end he draws inspiration from various religious and secular traditions towards fullness of life and its future existence.

The greatness of Mar Gregorios lies in envisioning and his farsightedness regarding the dangers and pitfalls in the scientific and technological advancements which possess a serious threat for the future of humanity when science and technology were in a developmental stage. The book on the whole provides a very interesting and a reflective reading for a subjective understanding and analytical approach to the controversial issue of science and technology for all those who are genuinely seeking a future.

**Fr. Vineeth Koshy** is the Executive Secretary, Commission on Youth at National Council of Churches in India.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Munib Younan. *Witnessing for Peace in Jerusalem and the World*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). Pages 169. by Fr. Bijesh Philip**

For the last six decades Palestinian issue has been a burning volcano from which lava is still flowing in Gaza and other parts of the region. In spite of many reconciliation efforts and treaties, it continues as a burning issue. Bishop Munib Younan takes an earnest effort in the classic work *Witnessing for Peace in Jerusalem and the World* to draw the attention of all especially the Christians to take initiative to bring about peace in the region starting with Jerusalem. He believes that solving the decades old issues between Jews and Muslims amicably and preparing a ground for the harmonious co existence of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem and surroundings will contribute to enhance global peace.

Munib Younan, the activist bishop of Jerusalem in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan is a typical son of Palestinian land and he is proud of his Arab culture and he introduces himself as a 'refugee bishop.' There is a detailed description of the sufferings of his parents and relatives as well as that of the parents of his wife Saud. There is a touching description of the tragic end of his uncle's son George Younan. This deaf and dumb man was just 38 years old when he became a victim of a suicide bus bombing. The response of the family to the queries of the media persons who were trying to exploit the situation gives a good impression about the commitment of the family to peace. George Younan's father, in the midst of his grief spoke to the media persons with these words: "The blood of my son, now mixed with the blood of Jewish children and Muslim children together, is shouting for peace and justice in this country. May God forgive those who did this and killed my son."

The author rules out all shallow solutions to the Palestinian issue. Without addressing the root issue of the unjust land occupation of the Jews from 1947 onwards and the ousting of the Palestinian Muslims from



their land, there will not be an enduring peace in the region. The attempt of the western media to label the reaction of the Palestinians only as violence is criticized here. While condemning all kinds of violence, particularly the unjust occupation is presented in the book as more dangerous violence which caused other violence. So a more just land distribution for Arabs and Jews is recommended as a means for enduring peace.

Aiming at peace through justice, Munib develops an enlightening theology of land which is a unique feature of this work. He repeatedly points out that land is a gift from God and its ultimate ownership is not with humans but God. The teaching about Jubilee in OT for the redistribution of land every fiftieth year for ensuring equality and justice is an affirmation of this thought (Leviticus 25:23-24). The idea of sabbatical rest for the land further strengthens this vision. The land was given not for fulfilling the craze for the domination but for the fulfillment of God's will and mission. So he explains convincingly the OT idea that disobedience to Yahweh's instruction defile the land.

Munib refers to Canon Naim Ateek's observation that there is a major contrast between the first entry of Jews and the second entry from the Babylonian exile in to the promised land. The first saw the indigenous inhabitants as wicked people who should be displaced and slaughtered. In contrast, the people of the exile saw the indigenous people realistically as sharers of the land. Bishop goes on to highlight a very clear vision of equality among all peoples in the prophets especially in post exilic prophets as the key to understand the divine approach to the land. After pointing out the pluralistic heritage of the land from the biblical times, he makes very significant comment about the present situation: "The security of any nation lies not in confiscation of land or in exiling another nation, but only in building mutual relationships of trust. It is a possibility that exists only through justice..... The security of Israel is interdependent with the issues of justice in the land and freedom for Palestinians." (p64)

A deep concern for the peace in Jerusalem and the future of Christian presence there, is noticeable in this piece of people's theology. With a lot of facts and figures bishop Munib exposes the dangerously diminishing Christian population in Palestine especially in the Holy city and pleads to the international community to support the dream for peace here in order to keep genuine followers of Jesus to continue in the places which are historically closely associated with Jesus' life. But this is not an

exclusivist dream regarding the city. He visualizes Jerusalem as city of peace where people belonging to different religions live in perfect harmony: "It is my dream that Jerusalem will become a shared city for equal rights and responsibilities corresponding to the aspirations of the two nations, the Israel and the Palestinian, and the three monotheistic faiths, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There will be no peace in the Middle East without a just peace for Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the symbol and promise of God's reconciliation to all humankind. It can become a living paradigm of coexistence and reconciliation between two nations and three faiths. I ask you to help us to realize this dream for a shared Jerusalem." p75

The author appeals to all to move from war to words for the restoration of peace through justice. Formal and informal dialogues and triologies help to overcome unnecessary prejudices and fears about the other communities and sort out root issues. The author's attempt to point out many commonalities of the major monotheistic religions prepare a good ground for dialogue. He repeatedly requests not to evaluate a religion on the basis of the aggressive activities of extremists in that religion. He observes that Christians and others also have to learn many things from other religions. As an example he highlights good insights from the five pillars of Islam-Confession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. True meaning of Jihad as striving and struggling to follow God's will and the depiction of greater Jihad as the internal striving by which an individual seeks to conquer evil with the forces of good and lesser Jihad as taking up arms only in self defence help to clarify many misunderstandings and expose the beauty of true Islam. Many practical measures are also recommend for the peace education of the new generations so that they could overcome misconceptions and fears concerning the people of other religions. In chapter eleven Bishop Munib shares how his family and the family of Rabbi Naomi Kelman of Jewish background built up friendship to break down barriers and continue as good family friends. The need of mutual enlightenment and learning from other religions is a prominent theme in the book.

Even if dialogue and peace education are treated as very significant for peace, it seems that the book does not recommend an active non-violent action plan for the Arabs and all victims for the restoration of peace and justice. It appears that there is a reluctance to take insights and inspiration from Gandhiji and Martin Luther King Jr for more active Non violent struggles for liberation.



The author strongly appeals to fellow Christians to get out of their superficial Christianity and to get rid of the fanatic attitudes and take seriously the genuine Christian discipleship. He vehemently criticizes the extremist Christian apocalypticists who see the establishment of the state of Israel as a fulfillment of ancient prophecy and part of an end time countdown leading to a nuclear conflagration at Armageddon. Over and over again it is affirmed that one can be an authentic Christian without being exclusivistic. Positively this piece of theology of peace makes powerful plea especially to Christians for taking an active role in witnessing for peace. Theology of *martyria* and the examples of the martyrs for peace like UN mediator Count Benadotte, Dr. Harold Fisher etc., give encouragement for witnessing the Lord by taking a deep commitment to peace and service to the victims of injustice and violence.

*Witnessing for Peace* is a good example of theologizing in the context with a preferential option for the liberation of the victims of injustice. This theology of peace through justice, non violence and interfaith relationships, is a flame of hope in the darkness of despair and violence not only in the Middle East but also all over the world.

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# STAR OF THE EAST

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